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SOURCES
OF
MODERN MASS ATHEISM
IN
RUSSIA

DISSERTATION

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by

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Preface

As the affairs of the world today become increasingly desperate, as many of us find ourselves driven to premature and rash decisions of many kinds, as we careen onwards in anxiety and fear of what tomorrow will bring, we extemporize valiantly but in vain, we bemoan the circumstances under which we are forced to live, and we have only time enough to consider the immediate tactics which could possibly assure us of our own personal survival. To attack, or to defend (which today mean the same thing, depending on the point of view) or to escape: such are the impulses or intentions which now threaten to govern us entirely. Few of us have time to think in this rush hour of history, an hour, during which time it is easier and more comfortable to accept the stereotyped outlook of an American or a Frenchman, or to select from a diversified array of political philosophies one particular guide to living in the hope that sometime, somewhere, it will carry us to the attack or the defense, or to our escape, successfully.

During the past hundred years the world has become deflated to the size of a toy balloon as distance was overcome, and as thoughts were set flying through the air. But brotherly community did not ensue, probably because it is easier to love neighbors from a distance than to love them at close quarters. The nineteenth century was witness to a vast psychological rearrangement of man's conception of man. Individuals having similar interests tended to band together instinctively as other nations or classes pressed closer. Believing that in numbers there was strength, man soon thought to identify himself with some higher type of allegiance, whether national or social. All this was to preserve unity or to enforce unity upon others. Over a period of time, it became too easy to have someone else do the thinking ordinarily exercised by the individual; it became a simple matter to let the doctrine of the group be the final arbiter of the problems of the individual; it became accepted practice to talk in terms of masses, group interests, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Ours is the era of the cliché, for never have so many words meant so little, nor have so many profound thoughts become so vapid.

The greatest abuse of all has been made of the two words: "atheism" and "Christianity". Battered and warped under the trip-hammer blows of revolutionary radicalism and hypocritical social convention, we have come to think in terms of congregations in dutiful attendance each Sunday on one hand, and of spiteful misfits and troublemakers on the other. Could the remarkable difference between faith and disbelief have become so obscured under the all-leveling hand of the cliché-makers?

In Russia today we find a flesh and blood example of a state which has been founded, organized and operated on the conscious premise that there is no God. What manner of atheism could this be? What is more important: where did it come from, and how did it become an inheritable tradition? The object here is to re-discover the issues at stake which have for so long been buried beneath the gloss of mass thinking.

The lengthy introduction to this paper has been provided for the ex-

press purpose of acquainting some of my readers with the rudiments of Russian history. It is not comprehensive by any means, but I think it will suffice to refresh the memories of some and to introduce a new field of study to others.

It would be an impossibly enormous task to investigate all of the sources of Russian atheism and it is for this reason that I have purposely entitled this work not THE sources, but simply "sources" of mass atheism in Russia. It was not out of caprice that I chose Belinsky, Bakunin and Herzen as subjects for study. All three were Russians, they were acquainted personally with one another, they were all prominent men in the intelligentsia, and they are the first ones that come to mind when someone mentions the origin of modern Russian atheism. The attempt to keep the study as "Russian" as possible must not obscure the fact that Russia has been continually bombarded by Western ideas as expressed by Hegel, Marx, Lenin, and many others over a long period of years.

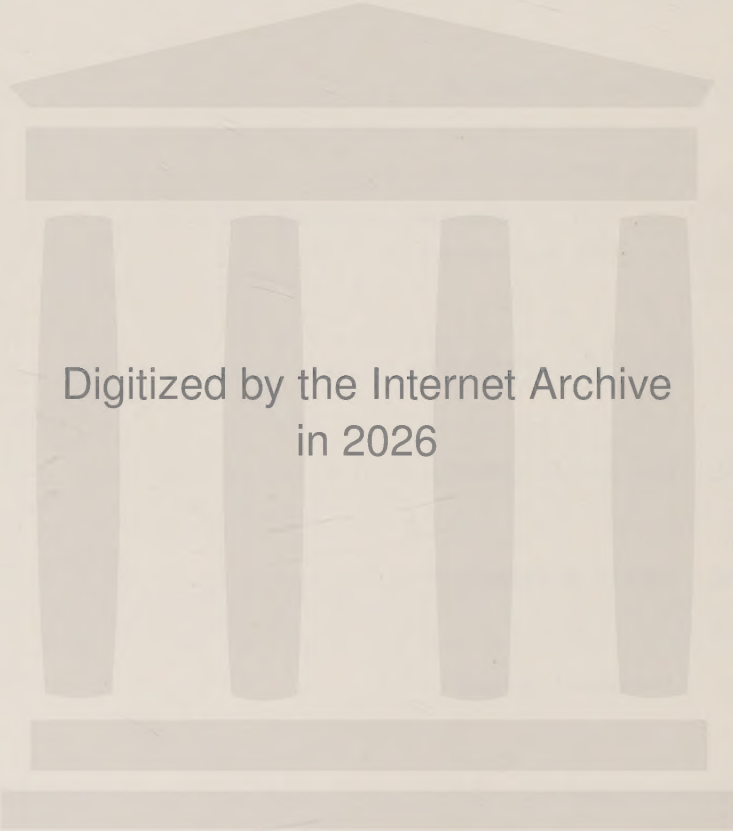
The method which I have employed for this study is historical and biographical. I realize the danger one is apt to encounter in a work of such nature: partiality. In many cases, the partiality of the author arouses suspicion in the minds of his reader. Be that as it may, it is impossible to remain impartial and neutral to Christianity, especially as regards the question of atheism. For this reason I feel I must say at this point that I have not tried to mask my own personal feelings in any way behind what must necessarily be a transparent screen. In a sense, a topic of this nature is a challenge to the historian as a person.

At this point I wish to extend my deepest appreciation and thanks to Professor Fritz Lieb not only for his guidance and encouragement, but for the use of his extensive library of Russian sources without which this paper could never have been written. To Professor Elsa Mahler I owe a debt of gratitude, for she revealed to me the beauty and power of the Russian language.

In addition, let me express here my heartfelt thanks to my wife, Barbara, for her work in typing the final draft of this dissertation, and to Mrs. Richard Logan for her sleuthing of renegade grammatical imperfections.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



1. *Early History*

During the time of Charlemagne, the great, empty Russian plain extending from the Carpathians to the Volga and from the Baltic to the Black Sea was astir with the growth and gradual development of the easternmost branch of the Slavs as they moved slowly over the expansive steppe. In this early period of their history they experienced three influences from without which had lasting significance.

The first great influence came from the north; from the Varangers, as they were called. Under their leader, Rurik, they penetrated the breadth of the Russian land from the Baltic to the Black Sea. They brought with them the technique of military organization, and administration. Furthermore, the Varangers had a taste for trade and the indigent Slavs were not slow in becoming commercially minded. The taste for conquest and an eye for a good bargain sharpened by the contact with the Normans occasioned an early contact with Constantinople, the richest city of the medieval world, also the heart of Eastern Christendom.

At the time of Vladimir's accession in 980, this great prince was as zealous a heathen as were the greater part of his subjects. By the year 989, however, the Prince and the whole Kievan state became officially Orthodox Christian. Vladimir's conversion to Orthodoxy was the act of a Prince and of a statesman while the mass conversion of his people was primarily an act of obedience rather than one of conviction. The contact with the Byzantine Empire which ended in a rapid conversion of the heathen Slavs to Christianity finds a parallel in the west where Roman Catholicism gathered the barbarous German tribes into the Christian fold. The Christianization of Russia in such a manner, through Byzantine Orthodoxy, constitutes the second great influence which was to contribute much to the following history of Russia. The third, was the invasion of the Russian plain by the Asiatic Horde which crossed over the Volga in the winter of 1237. This blow befell the Slavs just as they were emerging from a state of backwardness and barbarism, at a time when Slavic culture had begun to reach prominent heights, of which Kiev is the best example, and at a time when the message of Christianity was being digested by the great bulk of the people. Politically, Russia was decimated. The old feudal order, composed of a number of warring princes the chief of whom was by tradition the Prince of Kiev, had for several centuries led a precarious existence. It was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that we can discern signs of an alteration of this federalistic scheme. Moscow had begun to rise in the north thanks to its excellent commercial and military location, while Kiev gradually lost her prestige and former glory. It is in the Moscow

of Tartar times that the first changes in the political field become apparent. The federalistic mode of government disintegrated under the demands of military defence against the Horde, in order to make way for a more compact and efficiently centralized authority, similar to that exercised by the Khan. After two hundred years of subjugation, the Horde was driven out of Russia, leaving in its stead a feeling of intense Russian Nationalism forged in the fires of conflict. The absolute rule of the Tartars had been suffered, but it served as an example for forthcoming Russian sovereigns. For the people it meant that instead of seeking the easiest master of many princes within the federalistic feudal order they were now left without a choice or a voice, for their only alternative was to serve the Tsar or to become outlaws. The monolithic state was born, when in 1462 Ivan III proclaimed himself Tsar. And thus, we can distinguish the three main foreign ingredients from which were brewed the early Russian destiny.

It would be a mistake to conclude that these three *foreign* influences represent the only ingredients. One must not forget that the Russian people themselves have had a hand in forging the history of their country, although their fate has been an unhappy and tragic one. From the earliest days of the Muscovite Empire, and the old Kiev Principedom we have records heralding the deeds of the Princes, the Boyars, the Church, and later of the Tsar, but it is rare indeed to find mention of the peasants, for of them we get only glimpses. The story of them is almost throughout, a history of an underworld. Here, we find a clean cut that separates and keeps apart Government and People. This unfortunately is one of the characteristics of the whole of Russian history. To be sure, this split existed in other countries of the west, but never has this state of affairs reached such enormous proportions and such acuteness as it has in Russia—even until this very day! It is a temptation to regard this people as a mere subject world of servants that do the will of their masters, for it is just here that are found more noble traits of character than one expects. There are suggestions of wisdom, patience, humility and a morale of suffering that have encouraged messianistic tendencies in Russian thought. On the other hand however, the gulf which separated Government from People occasioned an instinctive anarchy among the people. No study of Russia would be complete without an awareness of the Russian "Muzhik", for in his problems lay the problems of the Empire.

During the Kiev period there existed the "Veche" or "Landsgemeinde", which was common in other regions of the Slavic world. The institution grew into importance as the organ for deciding local problems. It was attended by free men, and decisions were unanimous. The information about Novgorod shows that a similar organization existed there, attended by all who were not slaves. The idea of a governing or advisory body composed of all constituents of a given area is truly democratic. "The Word of Lord Novgorod the Great was concentrated in the city assembly or "Veche". The Veche had, in theory, unlimited power. The prince was free to raise questions, but was not able to decide them. . . . Any free citizen could attend. There was no regular procedure, nor were there regular times for meeting." (1) In time the Soviet Gospod was formed to replace

proposals for the popular council. It was not long before there grew a complete hierarchy of classes. This erased the democratic potential contained by the Veche. One of the important reasons for the disappearance of the assembly was its principle of unanimity, an old Slavonic idea that lay at the base of the "liberum veto" of the Polish Gentry, and found in the procedure of the Russian village commune. Decisions should be unanimous—to be secured by force if necessary.

During the XIIth century Kiev Slavs were used in agricultural work in that excellent black soil district. Following incessant wars among the princes it became increasingly difficult for free peasants to till the soil in peace. In short they were driven to find protection, that is, to tenant farm parts of the estates of the princes or boyars. To leave his position without repaying the lord for stock and land used would make the once free peasant a slave. An easy way out was migration, for this was the line of least resistance towards security. But the Tartars wreaked havoc with scattered farm settlements. Thus again, farmers had to obligate themselves to powerful landowners. Many men sold themselves for the sake of protection. Those who escaped by migration only prolonged the time when they too would meet the same fate as that of the burdened peasants who remained behind on the estates of central Russia. It is easy to see that it was but a question of time before all the peasants of Russia found themselves ensnared by some kind of obligation that impinged upon personal and political freedom. The foregoing gives but a sketchy glance of the early beginnings of what later became known as the "peasant problem". It is with this problem that the powerful triad: Tsar, Church, and Boyars had to contend and what eventually brought all three down into chaos and destruction in the end. The "Muzhik", humble as he was and is, has constantly been the minor-key Leitmotif of Russia's tragic symphony.

The threefold influence from foreign quarters, which found Russian form in the threefold character of Russian power: Tsar, Church, and Boyar, comprises the rudiments of an extremely centralized power. The monolithic state arose gradually, for in the earlier days of the Muscovite Empire the Tsars were not without checks against unlimited exercise of power. The Boyars, grouped in assembly exerted an advisory influence upon the ruler and at times backed their will with military force. The Church was itself a power, because of its almost complete control of the spiritual life of the nation. Russian Orthodoxy's stature was enormously increased after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Here we notice the ascendancy of "Third Rome" feeling among some of the upper segments of the clergy. It arose from the letter that an obscure monk, Philoteus of Pskov, wrote to the Prince of Moscow. "The church of ancient Rome fell because of heresy. As to the second Rome, it has been hewn down by the axes of the Ishmaelites. But this third Rome, the Holy Apostolic Church, under thy mighty rule shines throughout the world more brightly than the sun. . . . Two Romes have fallen but the third stands and no fourth shall ever be."² By the end of the XVIth century the Russian Church had attained maturity, marked by the consecration of the Metropolitan Job as the first Patriarch of Russia in 1589. The church enjoyed the favor of the Tsar, exerted great spiritual power over him, and was influential

in state affairs, while at the same time it held a magical attraction for the peasantry.

Let me emphasize once again: the common denominator of this rapidly growing despotic trinity can be found in the fact that all three exerted power over the people separately and combination, in an authoritarian manner: the Tsar, in his demands for service to the government;³ the Church, in preventing any normal and free growth of culture and the spirit; the Boyars, for being the immediate cause in a moral sense of the deplorable state of peasant life.

To keep such authoritarian power intact it was necessary to adopt a policy of little change and careful advance. These three elements of Russian power were deprived of freedom of movement in their efforts to conserve the strength that was theirs. Just how static Russian thought and action had become but also how distrustful the Russian peasant was of any more outside influence or change is best shown in what is known as the Raskol, or the dissenter controversy. In the latter half of the XVIIth century, as a result of the urging of the Patriarch Nikon, the official church decided to take steps toward church reform. The immediate object was to correct faulty translations of church literature, and to amend certain ceremonial practices which in the course of years through neglect or carelessness had become altered from the original usage. The motivation was one of conservatism, in that it was desired to make Orthodoxy truly orthodox. Furthermore, there can be discerned an underlying desire to "go back to the originals" which indicates some measure of Renaissance influence. The move was greeted with praise from the more enlightened sectors of the clergy and from Greek theologians who had perceived the errors. But others among the circle of isolated monasteries and the peasantry, who saw in each motion of the village priest's hand, and caught each word as it fell from the priest's lips as the embodiment of holiness, condemned the reform effort as altogether heretical and anti-Christian. As the official church pushed its reform ahead, it also thrust aside the feeling of the lower clergy and the people. Regardless of the nature of the reform and its necessity, the fact remains that by this act of the Patriarch, the church was severed from the people.

Within this same century the people had sustained another telling blow. Peasant rights had gradually diminished until the "Time of Troubles," when they received some small measure of relief. But after the Romanoff's ascended the throne, peasant rights slowly died along with the old Zemsky Sobor. In the Ulozhenie of 1649 Alexis finally confirmed the establishment of serfdom. Peasant rights were not repealed but were simply ignored. Gradually, the peasants grew to be regarded as chattel. Their administration was in the arbitrary hands of their masters; provisions for the punishment of fugitives was made. Briefly, they were made slaves.

An uneasy feeling crept over the land. Riots, mobs and disturbances grew in number. Suddenly, in the Lower Volga region, the daring Stenka Razin plunged the entire area into desperate turmoil which lasted for more than three years (1667-1671).

The only remedy was to make the gentry more absolute and thus crush the rebellion by force. The revolt was put down and with that the Russian people descended into an abyss of which there is no history. Simultaneously, Nikon had cut off the nationalistically inclined Old Believers through his purge of the church books and liturgy. Thus with the transportation of Razin to Moscow for execution in 1671, and the burning at the stake of the Raskolnik (Old Believer) Avvakum in 1681, the break between Government and People was absolutely and irrevocably complete!

Russian history is generally divided into two distinct periods; before, and after Peter the Great, or the period of the old Byzantine orientated Muscovite Empire and the Russian Empire of modern West European character. Because Peter's revolution from above was so quickly executed and western culture and technique flooded so suddenly into the upper segments of the Russian class system it serves well as a prominent landmark.

The immensity of Peter's action overshadows the very important fact that from the "Time of Troubles" (1584-1613) until the beginning of Peter's reign, Russia was becoming ripe for the final swing to the west. In the technical, cultural, and religious fields there are evidences of a gradual movement towards the west, but at a comfortable pace. Peter accelerated it. Before the founding of St. Petersburg, Poland acted as the principal agent for transmitting Western influences into Russia. Under the persistent pressure of new cultural and spiritual forces from the west and southwest, cracks began to appear in the insulated Muscovite structure. Catholic Poland and Lithuania, whose power extended into the Ukraine, were closely tied up in the West European complex, and were thus obliged to accept or struggle with the great impacts of change that took place in the west. It was inevitable that some of the forces generated should have been transmitted to Russia. It is in the field of religion that these initial influences were felt. Poland was Catholic, including strong elements of Protestantism. Moscow found it difficult to avoid friction at such close quarters. Prince Khvorostinin was a typical product of West-Russian influence, and a pupil of Polish teachers. After he rigorously criticised the government of the early Romanoff's, he was banished to a monastery. "He is typical of his time. He is also the distant and confused precursor of a line of Russian thinkers in revolt against their country's traditions. The first of these dramatic figures, he seems to mark the first breach in the Third Rome's theocratic stronghold."⁴ From 1613, monks were called from Kiev to Moscow to propagate their advanced ideas. These were Orthodox clergymen but they were sympathetic to the West. Great numbers of Ukrainians⁵ had visited western universities such as Prague, Krakow, Rome, Padua, Vienna, Paris, Leiden, Leipzig, Gottingen, and Konigsberg. Some of the clergy "would even go so far as to adopt Catholicism temporarily in order to attend Catholic seminaries, then return to Russia, where they would go back to Orthodoxy, retaining the fruits of Western erudition."⁶ As one result of this infiltration of western influence, we find a mushrooming growth of Orthodox theological schools in Vilna, Kiev, Brest, Minsk and so on which were based on the

neo-scholastic teaching methods of the Catholic schools. This system brought with it a strong humanistic influence, in the strict logical form of the then developing Baroque. The capital of these institutions of learning was Kiev after the establishment in 1631 of the "Kiev-Mogilan Kollegium" named for Peter Mogila. One of the best known of the enlightened nobility was Fedor Rtistchev, Tsar Alexis's majordomo. A firm member of the Orthodox Church, he was broad-minded and tolerant. He advocated the study of Western science and founded a school of theology that was directed by the Kiev monks.

Both the Catholic and Protestant inroads into the theocratic Russia met with opposition from official quarters. But for a few of the upper classes of the aristocracy and the clergy, the slight vibrations of western activity filtering through the bulk of Poland and the Ukraine seemed to be tremors portending the great earthquake of Peter's reign.

During this same period signs were evident within the official church that Greek influence, at least in Church affairs, was heard by willing ears, the result of which was the already mentioned church reform movement, initiated by Nikon, and carried through in true Renaissance spirit.

The economic and technical phases of western influence in Russia before Peter are best shown by the activities of the inhabitants of the "German Suburb" of Moscow, founded in 1652. The services desired of its residents were those which would contribute to the modernization of the army, and the establishment of the barest beginnings of Russian industry. Here, Russia confined herself to accepting the ready-made material products of Western Civilization. "Russia was gradually emerging from Byzantine rigidity and turning towards the west to seek a synthesis between the ancient traditions which she had outgrown and the modern European world."

But at this point, regardless of the manifold cultural and spiritual western influences felt in Russia between ca. 1550 and 1680, there was still a mighty gulf which separated Russia from Europe. Very briefly, let us review the principal reasons for the manifest backwardness of Russia as compared with Western Europe.

A late start: The history of Russia did not begin as we know it until the middle of the ninth century A.D. At that time the Russian people lived in loosely organized tribes, existing in primitive style. Western countries find their origins from early contact with the Roman Empire many years before.

Arrested development: This took two forms, the first of which was military. It consisted in the overrunning of Russia by the invading Tartars. They remained on Russian soil for over 200 years during which time the Russians were occupied in an intense struggle for survival. Had the Russians not been forced to direct their energies and attentions so completely towards Asia, they would possibly have come within the European sphere much earlier than 1700, and have also gained, through study, a better appreciation of their own Russia. The second factor that was a cause of Russia's retarded development is found within the realm of the literary and cultural. From Byzantium came Orthodoxy and with it the heritage of the Greek civilization. But the heiress to the treasures of ancient Greece saw

but little of her fortune. It was the practice of the Greek Church to allow the use of the vernacular in church rites and literature in the districts where Greek was not the general language of intercourse. Cyril and Methodius, intent upon the evangelization of the Slavic Balkans, put a particular Bulgarian dialect into written form, which later became the church language in Russia. Known now as Old Church Slavic, it was used as the vehicle for the propagation of Christianity, eliminating the need for a knowledge of the Greek tongue. Liturgies and other spoken forms of the church service as well as the Bible were translated in order that the ceremony be understandable to the congregations. This was a mixed blessing. Widespread use of the vernacular might have made Christianity more understandable to the people, but since it eliminated the Greek language and the need for its study, this key to the Greek civilization was not at the disposal of a great number of potential Russian scholars. Such material had to be filtered through a bottleneck of translation, which restricted not only the flow of the classical traditions into Russia but also the influx of Biblical and theological material. Latin played the role of cultural and religious vehicle in the west and was the universal literary language. Greek never enjoyed such widespread use in Russia.

The Church: Eastern Orthodoxy by its very nature hampered general development in Russia comparable to that seen in the west. The church's position was solid, for its hierarchs had gained important political, social, and financial ground between 1200 and 1450 by filling the vacuum left by quarreling feudal princes and preoccupied Tartar invaders. From that time onward the church was in its ascendancy, climbing to ever greater heights of prestige. The Orthodox faith can be characterized by the Icon, which evinces an elaborate primitiveness and beauty combined with the strong suggestion of ultra-conservatism and other-worldiness. The magnificent cathedrals give the same impression—veritable heaven on earth. The church's prime consideration was the guarding of the faith, to keep it true. (Orthodoxy in Russian is *Pravoslavnaya* or the true faith) All philosophy was looked upon as heresy by the church as it ran counter to the prescribed and accepted practices and doctrines of inner development, asceticism and mysticism. The West already experienced scholasticism, it had become conscious of the Renaissance message of defiance to the theocentric attitude, and had felt the shock of the Reformation as the religious protest against an autocratic church. In Western Europe a new era was born, while Russia plodded ahead under the direction of her conservative but potent spiritual leader, the Orthodox Church.

Last but far from least, Russia lay completely landlocked and geographically isolated from the Western European peninsula. This situation restricted direct contact with the west, and was to be remedied by Peter's bold campaigns against the Swedes. He won his opening, and later founded Petersburg, his "window on Europe", as Algarotti described it.

It is, quite understandably, not the goal of this paper to deal extensively with this earlier period of Russian History. As far as the minute but interesting details of this era are concerned, I leave such further probing up to the reader in the knowledge that there is a wealth of material in

existence designed to satisfy such curiosity and interest that may have arisen in the course of reading the foregoing survey.

Before stepping into the Russia of Peter the Great, let me present by way of a resume the ground we have just covered. What is now Russia was originally sparked into life by certain impacts resulting from contact with the outside world. They were: the adventurous Varangers, Byzantine Christianity and Culture, and the Invasion of the Tartars. These outside influences however do not represent the complete picture of Russia's birth. It is only in relation to the Slavic peoples that we can discern signs of national life. In early Kiev, a commercial city of the north-south water road, Russian national spirit found its federalistically organized beginnings and blossomed into a remarkably superior culture. This came to an end during the Tartar invasion. The departure of the Tartars after two-hundred years found Russia transformed. Moscow was the center, and the Tsar was sovereign ruler of a centralized state which demanded of its subjects obedient service and unqualified allegiance. The Church had gained immeasurably in power due to its success in remaining apart from the struggle with the Tartars. The nobility had received land rewards for service to the Tsar and had served as the "protector" of the peasants—in return for their souls. The design takes shape. Here we see the classical emample of an alliance of sovereign, priest, and nobleman against the people. Here were partners in authority, each supporting the other in tyranny. What is significant is the ever-deepening abyss that began to separate this threefold authority from the people. Here is the tragedy of Russian History—the abyss has never since been bridged.

The break became complete in the latter half of the XVIIth century by the government and ecclesiastical victory over Stenka Razin and the Old Believer Avvakum.

In the same century Russia began to feel the repercussions of western life after having been so completely isolated and preoccupied by oriental affairs. Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine served as the medium through which these initial western impulses were transmitted to Russia. It was mainly with the problems arising from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that Russia was concerned. As we have seen and shall see, western influences reached only the upper segments of Russian life: the Tsar, the Church, and the Nobility. Here again the evidences of the yawning chasm that lay between those in authority and the people are to be noticed.

The birth of the monolithic state, the power of the church which operated in partnership with the state, the nobility which owed direct service to the state, and a people rapidly losing their freedom are the threads that compose the woven pattern. To this is added a new color: the influence of the west.

2. *Peter the Great (1682-1725)*

Of all the truly unforgettable figures of world history, Peter the Great stands out in all prominence due him. Here was a man who lived

his life at high speed, a man of inexhaustable and almost intolerable energy and action who left his mark on Russia, visible even today. What is there that distinguishes him from others of his kind? It was a combination of a reckless character that was very Russian in that it knew no extreme; and the burning obsession, that he must Europeanize Russia completely so as to eradicate the shameful backwardness and senseless conservatism that threatened to confine Russia in a swamp for years on end. Once he was filled with this conviction there was no element in heaven or on earth that could deter him. He was master of the state and so had at his finger-tips the wherewithall to carry his plan to its logical conclusion.

Peter intended great things for his country, but his first consideration was to build up a strong centralized government patterned after the western model in order to create adequate insurance for the survival of his plan, for his life time he knew to be too short for the realization of all his dreams. During the forty-three gallant years of Peter's reign he did erect this government and create a system that lived on after his death until the abdication of Nicholas II. The army was modernized to the extent that it was a force in later European wars. He built a navy, began the construction of canals, and midwifed the birth of Russian industry. All of these great goals achieved become secondary when confronted with the government as it existed at the time of Peter's death.

In the previous section the gulf between Government and people was emphasized. Here we shall see that the chasm widened, and the apartness accentuated. In Peter's efforts to build an institution to perpetuate his idea of Russian advancement along western lines he used his authority to recruit from the gentry servants for the government. Service was essential, either military or civil.

Peter was thorough in his selection and organization of those elements of Russian life which might be of service to his grand plan, and he shrewdly left no opportunity for these elements once incorporated into the system to reach a position from which his authority could be challenged. His greatest potential enemy was his partner, the Church. His action in regard to the Church deserves examination. In it several things will become evident, including the decisiveness of Peter's character, the totalitarian proportions of the Petrine system, and the subjugation of the church.

There are many and varying impressions of Peter as the religious man. The descriptions of Peter's religious life are as many as his defenders and those he offended. Let it suffice to say that he viewed religion in what seemed to him a realistic way, namely in what way could religion, the Church, serve him. There were many enemies of Peter in the Church in that they objected to his westernizing plans as a corruption of the pure Russian being, but mainly these elements were among the nationalistic Old Believers or Raskolniki who had earlier refused to recognize the Nikon reformation. To Peter, however, the church was a social force not to be abolished but to be skillfully pressed into his service. It was a force he desired to supervise and control. His other enemies in the church were the hierarchs because they represented an organized Church with a spiritual "Tsar" at the helm. Such an organization came closest to being

the combination strong enough to challenge the whole Petrine system and succeed. In 1700 Patriarch Adrian died. Peter deferred the choice of his successor until a later date because it was such an important step and needed ample consideration. An appointment was never made. In 1721 an ordinance was issued to the effect that in the future the church was to be governed by the "Holy Synod", composed of the principal hierarchs of the church and supervised by a lay Ober-Procurator, the "Tsar Eyes", whose function it was to see that the Synod did nothing to displease the sovereign. For centuries Church and state in partnership had vied with one another for ascendancy until Peter effectively reduced the Church to a subordinate department of his government. Here began a secularization of church authority which was to have far reaching results. It is surprising that there was not more protesting from the clergy and laymen when the unholy union came about, but for a large part the reason was that the church had already begun to show signs of decay.⁹

The lateral schism had already grown to large proportions, separating officialdom from Raskol and lay peasantry, but the developments of 1721 accentuated the split especially since persecutions of minority groups were instigated by the state Church and supported by the Government. Peter wisely knew that he must manage the affairs of the Church very closely rather than abolish it altogether, and to this end the Synod served his purpose. Indeed, he gained control of the official Church, but only the top segment. The lower clergy could not be managed so easily nor the people, except through the use of external force. Like a man who attempts to lift a heavy koffer, by pulling on a worn out handle, succeeds only in tearing the handle loose from the trunk; so Peter grasped for the entire control of the Russian Church and came away with only the hierarchy of the official church in his palm.

In January of 1725 Peter died. In his lifetime he had successfully cast Russia headlong into European affairs, he had forged a heavily centralized government, all the existing powers of Russia, including church and gentry, were impressed into the service of the state. He had not had time to alleviate the steadily declining fortunes of the peasantry, for in serfdom he saw an institution he could not hope to replace. These new creations put upon the peasantry a burden which they could not carry. Engelmann has said that the "weight imposed made the foundations sink deeper into the ground". In every phase of life in Russia from politics to religion the upper segment who ruled were cut off completely from the governed subjects in the restless underworld.

Historians and philosophers from Peter's day to ours have grappled with evaluations of the great Tsar's life work. Alone, he had erected a new state. Russia emerged as an integral part of Europe, and he had made himself a dictator—the apex of a finely organized state system. Of the appraisals made of Peter's reign, particularly by Russian intellectuals of the XVIIIth. century, there is in each presentation of opinion an interesting mixture of blessings and curses. Sumarokov glorifies Peter's work in saving Russia from sinking into darkness, but he can also proudly claim that the old Tsars protected justice, and refused to clutter the Russian language

with foreign borrowings.¹⁰ According to Shcherbatov it would have taken Russia 200 years to accomplish in an organic way what Peter the Great did in the years of his reign. Shcherbatov's "On the Depravity of Morals in Russia" sounds an opposite note: the rapidity of movement had torn loose the moral foundations of the country; in pruning the dead branches, the tree had been damaged; in rooting out superstition, faith had been impaired,¹¹ Klyuchevsky said that by racing against the wind, Peter increased the velocity of the wind about him. The quiet man was everywhere affronted.

The abrupt and drastic changes in Russia, symbolized by St. Petersburg, stirred the consciousness of Russian thought. In the struggle over the issues Peter had brought to the surface, the Russian intelligentsia began to take shape. Here was the first real challenge: Russia's position in relation to the west.

The key to the complexity of the problems arising out of the rapid initiation of Russia into the circle of Western Nations lies in the fact that the entire process of assimilation of Russia to the West took on an inverted character. A normal pattern would consist of a coherent transition from thought to action to product, in this order, but in Russia the attempt was made to adopt the western product without seriously questioning the thought and action from which it was necessarily born.

The friends of Old Russia had to concede that the west was more advanced at that time and that Russia too had to advance herself. There is a deep significance in that the early Slavophiles were more aware of the implications of the reversed procedure and its threat to the Russian character than were the westernizers who had few qualms about the possible detrimental effects on original thought. Under Peter the Great, Russia was obliged to accept the finished product of Europe. But to accept these things without a thought basis comparable to that existing in Western Europe would be to deprive Russia of any chance for the development of her own independence and character, while not to accept these ready-made products Russia would impose on herself further restriction of an already vastly retarded advancement. Here are two horns of the dilemma—*independence or rapid advancement.*¹²

3. The Enlightenment in Russia

What was the nature of the Enlightenment that came into bloom in Western Europe at the time of the entrance of Russia into European affairs? Its general and main characteristics were: (1) A substitution of natural law for supernatural law or science for religion. (2) Human reason, the discoverer of natural law, was exalted and (3) dignity and happiness were to be restored to man through the adoption of a broad humanitarianism. Although the Enlightenment came into maturity in France, it was by no means an exclusively French product. Enlightenment was a high point reached in western thought that was the sum total of Medieval scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, early scientific

discoveries by such men as Galileo, Newton, the rationalist philosophy of Descartes and the deism of Hobbes. As a religious phenomenon, the Enlightenment was the product of a gradual shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric way of thought, coupled with the first major revelations of the mysteries of our physical world that were previously taken to be of a divine nature only because of their mystery. In England, under the guidance of Thomas Hobbs, deism had taken root as a device by which theologians could synchronize their belief in God with their convictions in the integrity of natural law, and as an apologetic system to meet the demands of Newtonian physics. Deism is defined as a belief in God as the "First Cause" or the supreme reasoner. God, then, was regarded as simply the creator of man and the world, who, after the act of creation, left man to seek his own natural religion independent of revelation and miracle, and to base his life on the tenets of science and natural law. These English Deists sought to give Christianity a logical justification as a product of social evolution and as a natural reaction to natural laws. Upon leaping the Channel into France, this same deism was taken up as a weapon to be used against the feudalistic Catholic Church.

By far the greatest figure of the French Enlightenment was Voltaire (1694-1778). He interpreted English Deism in France, not as a theological apology, but as the means to weaken the absolute and feudalistic grip that the Roman Catholic Church had over the people. Voltaire was no atheist, but he was anti-clerical. The Church to him was a repository for superstition, and a hindrance to the free expression of natural law. However strongly he attacked the Church he still remained on deistic ground, acknowledging the "First Cause". Without this one check there would be no bridle against the anarchy of the mob, too unlearned to act wisely, rationally, and morally without God. "If there be no God, he should have been invented." Voltaire, the Deist, was nevertheless Voltaire, an ancestor of modern atheism, for it was but a short and simple step from the denatured God of Deism to no God at all.

Lamettrie (1709-1751) dismissed the Deist God entirely, because God's existence was scientifically unprovable. He espoused the idea that man is a machine, that the soul is materialistic, and that natural morality is to be accepted instead of religious injunction. Here was an atheist, and one of the founders of French materialism.

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was the editor of the famous French Encyclopedia, the intellectual and ideological ammunition depot of the French Revolution. Diderot's atheism was not the militant and popular type fostered by Communism today, but an atheism for those of high culture. The explosiveness of atheism was as plainly recognized by Diderot as by Voltaire, but Diderot frankly stated that he and his kind were atheists, but with no overwhelming desire to push it onto the uneducated population. Where Voltaire clings to his First Cause for fear of the rabble, Diderot throws away even that, declares himself an unbeliever, and is in no hurry to press on—for fear of the rabble.

By far the most powerful atheist of the later French Enlightenment was Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789). His greatest work, "The System of

Nature" (1770), is regarded as the apex of French Materialistic thought, and has had a great influence in the shaping of anti-religious doctrine in the Soviet Union. For atheists, Holbach is far from dead. Holbach, in the first part of "The System of Nature", explained that materialism was based on the principal that the universe is a mechanism composed of uncreated matter in motion. Later in the book, he expounds his atheistic convictions. There is no God, no soul, no divine right. Man should be governed by human reason on the basis of utilitarianism. Here, in concentrated form, were all the utterances of volitive opinion expressed throughout the century. Holbach, brought violent criticism upon himself not only from state and ecclesiastical sources but from his own fellows. Voltaire opposed him, and Diderot appraised the situation thus: ". . . But as soon as the people dared to attack the foundations of religion,—no stops were possible. Turning their threatening vision against the majesty of heaven, inevitably, they direct it also upon terrestrial powers. The cable that holds up and chokes humanity is braided of these two ropes. One cannot break one without also breaking the other".¹³

Such, briefly sketched, was the face of intellectual Europe that Mother Russia saw when she peered through the new window fashioned by Peter the Great (1682-1725). There were several pioneering efforts before that time that demand attention. Their work consisted mostly in probing tentatively the recent western intellectual developments in search of some application to Russian problems.

The priest Theofan Prokopovitch (1681-1736) is one of the best examples of Western influence within the realm of the official Church Hierarchy. He towered over his colleagues of the church in his spiritual freedom and was Peter's ecclesiastical advisor in the drafting of the great church reform of 1721. He came from the Ukraine, where he was in close contact with the forces of change that permeated the southwest. Prokopovitch also had an extensive knowledge of Protestantism revealed in his criticism of Javorsky's "Rock of Faith" that was published in 1728. Peter had raised him to the status of Archbishop of Novgorod. To point up the "liberalism of this man, his remarks on the scientific achievements of Copernicus are enlightening. "If the pupils of Copernicus and scientists who defend the movement of the earth can present as proofs of their opinion reliable mathematical data, then the text of the Holy Scripture in which the movement of the sun is mentioned cannot be taken as a refutation, and the text must be understood not in the literal but in the allegorical sense."¹⁴ In his attack on the Pope and the inquisition he wrote:

"Oh, barbarian stupidity, abysmal dregs of a blind world!

Is it for thee to judge the luminous thoughts of Galileo?

Is it for thee to accuse as criminal a penetrating mind vigilant as a lynx?

Apparently the vile mole-warp sees better than the lynx!"¹⁵

Such a view as this towards the Catholic Church struck equally hard against Orthodoxy whose intellectual backwardness was to him even greater than that of the Roman Church. Prokopovitch, the student of Bacon, and Descartes among others; the possessor of a 30,000 volume library, can with assuredness be called a pioneer of Russian enlightenment.

Among other personalities of the period preceding the reign of Katherine II, mention must be made of Vassily Tatishchev (1686-1750) and Antioch Kantimir (1708-1744). Both were impressed with the need for enlightenment in Russia and were alike in their opposition to the murkiness of the Orthodox Church and the deplorable state of the peasantry. One of the most prominent figures of the period was the self-made man, Lomonosov. This peasant of Archangel studied at Moscow, and abroad, then later reached great heights in the intellectual world. He is generally recognized as the "Father of modern Russian Literature", but his activities carried him into the neighboring fields of philology, history, and science.

Katherine II (the Great), born Princess Sophia of Anhalt-Yerbst became the bride of the heir apparent to the Russian throne, Peter III, in 1744. She had had a good education in the western style and in her earlier years showed an avid interest in intellectual affairs that was not to diminish until late in her long reign. The Empress Elizabeth died in 1762, and Peter III became emperor. His status as such did not last longer than half a year at which time he fell prey to the ambitious designs of his wife. Eventually, with the help of her devoted favorites, Peter was murdered. At this point, Katherine, who owed her crown to "God and the choice of her subjects", became firmly established.

In such a way Katherine's mighty reign was inaugurated. In the first decade of her reign she conducted herself like the enlightened monarch she wished so much to be. Her active mind was fascinated by the great intellectual developments taking place in western Europe under Voltaire's leadership. She was quick to assume the role of protectress of humanity through the benevolent exercise of power based on the precepts of reason, justice, and natural law. Katherine became a "benevolent despot". In this respect she encouraged her intimates to delve into the great fund of material newly revealed in the west in hope of finding some application to existing affairs in Russia.¹⁶ The result of these labors was the Nakaz of 1767, which was designed to reconstitute Russian Law. Within a year the Nakaz was rejected by the reviewing assembly. With the exception of a few pages, the Nakaz consisted of direct borrowings from Montesquieu's "L'Esprit des Lois" and Beccaria's "Crimes and Punishments". If nothing else was accomplished by this action here was at any rate a statement of what principles the government *should* observe. And when the Empress herself says that Power is not exercised in the manner it should be there is at least a tacit encouragement for men to think and criticize freely. This was unfortunately the only value of the Nakaz. Katherine also offered, in 1767, a memorandum to the Holy Synod in which she urged quite radical reforms of the church such as religious toleration, simpler ceremonies, and easier divorce.¹⁷ The suggestions were rejected on the grounds that they would threaten the integrity of the church and also jeopardize the security of the throne. In both of these instances, in which progressive reform was attempted, Katherine was faced with failure because the first constituted a reduction of the power of the gentry, and the second, minimization of the role of the church. Katherine, the former German princess, could not press matters because she owed her exalted position

to gentry and church and needed their support. Perhaps Katherine knew that her measures would never be accepted and only submitted her ideas in order that her friends (i. e. Fredrick, Joseph of Austria, and her idols in France) would be pleased at her efforts to be Enlightened". Her later actions can only lend credibility to such a conjecture.

Western Enlightenment continued to flood her court in spite of these failures, and Katherine rapidly became the darling of all the despots. The first event which occasioned a change in Katherine's policy of enlightenment occurred in 1772, the Pugatchov insurrection. Ten years previous, Peter III issued a declaration proclaiming the independence of the gentry, in that they were no more required to serve in the civil and military offices of the state. This was Peter's only important act of office, the result of which was a formation of an aristocracy of the western pattern, having no other object than the pursuit of its own fortune. There was no corresponding lightening of the load which the peasantry had to bear. Patience, and quiet suffering gave way to pent up indignation. For three years the lower Volga region was in turmoil. Finally Pugatchov, who pretended to be the assassinated Peter III, was captured and executed. The once rebellious peasantry retired into the pattern of the earlier days, assuming again their patient quietude. But the gentry was severely shaken. Katherine also was uneasy. The year 1775 marked the end of the peasant war and the beginning of measures designed to augment even more the already autocratic power which the gentry held in local administration.¹⁸

During the next fifteen years the earlier progressive schemes introduced by Katherine and her enlightened court gradually lost their glamour and finally receded with time into oblivion. It was not until the outbreak of the French Revolution, that Katherine conclusively shut the door on the west. It was then that she and her courtiers realized without a shade of doubt that the charm and brilliance of active enlightened French thinking which had attracted them all like so many moths about a street light, was but the dazzling exterior of ideas which were to provide the energy for general social upheaval. The intensity of Katherine's attempt to cover up her past indiscretions is shown in her severe treatment of Radishchev. Katherine, the great bulk of her countries and the gentry, rapidly shifted to the camp of the reaction. They feared the loss of powerful possessions whether of an Empire, or an estate of 500 souls. But there were a few men who refused to follow the herd, and it is in these men that the flame of the Russian Enlightenment was kept alive. Here the seeds of the Russian Revolution found fertile soil in which to grow.

What can explain this strange sequence of events? Empress and nobility had deceived themselves by thinking that it was impossible to appease their consciences by correcting their faults, and still retain all the power they held before as payment for generosity. Such an idea is grotesque. It can only be ascribed to an appalling lack of understanding of the social, political, and religious content, and implications of the Enlightenment. The deception lasted only until the time that these Russians finally realized the fantastic incongruity of the message of the Enlightenment and themselves, the messengers. Power could not be held and still be given away!

The Russian Enlightenment, sparked by the Western Thinkers of the time, took place among the higher segments of society, or the so-called progressive class. Over all pervaded the grand idea, namely: an enlightened and just reconstruction of society to be brought into effect by enlightened minds. Faced by such an objective, Russian thought gradually separated into two generally identifiable parallel channels. The first, let us call Voltairean; the second, Masonic. In the first instance, it was acknowledged that human reason had to be developed in order to create reasonable and just government and thus make the force of enlightened thinking be felt at all levels of society. But Masonic thought was wary of the omnipotence of reason as is seen in their contention that the development of reason by the individual is slight, and that even in cases where one is mentally enlightened, one is not always morally equipped. The objectives are the same, ideological content is identical, but the difference lies in the frame of mind, as if those of logical mind followed one course while those of sentimental bent chose a different path. Later on, after some of the earlier Voltairians had become converted to the faith of Holbach, Diderot, and French materialism of the Encyclopedist movement, "frame of mind" could no longer explain the divergency that arose, especially since masonry took corresponding steps in the opposite direction towards mysticism and general reaction opposing extreme rationalism.

Both the Enlightenment and Freemasonry are children of the period of Confessionalism in European history. Religious strife and bigotry had worn out the continent, and had cleared the air, so to speak. Devastation wrought was not commensurate with the issue at stake, so men of that era soothed past agitations through tolerance and cosmopolitanism and sought new issues. Affections were transferred from God and Church to man and nature; the Enlightenment was born. Freemasonry, however, did not accept tolerance towards religion passively as a means of closing once for all a dark chapter of history, but attempted to combine the fruits of the Enlightenment under a religious canopy. Theirs was the role of mediator and reconciler of differences between churches and denominations of the Christian faith and other faiths. Secret meetings provided the intellectual, exclusive, and enlightened flavor while ceremony lent the early organization a religious aura.

The first Lodge was established in 1717 in London and Masonry quickly found root in Germany shortly thereafter. John Phillips was made Provincial Grand Master of Russia in 1731. Russian Masonry grew slowly at first, but gained added impulse in the middle of the century when German Masonic influence began to be felt.¹⁹ During the closing years of Empress Elizabeth's reign the secret meetings were cause for great anxiety for it was believed that these gatherings were part of a plot against Russia inspired by Prussia. After Katherine's usurpation of the throne both the Enlightened elements of higher society and Freemasonry were left to themselves.

Early Russian Freemasonry grew of itself, without much direction and as a men's club with the accompanying diversions. According to the testimony of Jelagin who became a member in 1750, he was thoroughly repelled

by the low moral standards and degeneration. Russian Masonry he described as "a play in which the service of Minerva was transformed into a celebration of Bacchus."²⁰ Jelagin remained in the organization, but was not satisfied. In the late sixties he came into contact with an Englishman traveling in Russia who revealed to him the nature of British Masonry, explaining its serious work, emphasizing it as a sacred science, and pointing out its opposition to the prevalent materialism of the day.²¹ In 1770 a lodge of the English System was founded in St. Petersburg. In 1772 Jelagin was made Grand Master of Russia.²² In 1776 the English lodges combined with those of Reichel's less severe organization. This date marked the beginning of the development of St. Martinian ideas in Russia and the subsequent growth of Rosicrucianism, based on God, Nature, and Self. The trend to Martinism was one that led to a moralistic-religious mysticism. Towards the state, this new masonic movement was largely passive as the state too was experiencing a retreat from the extremes of enlightened rationalism. This is singularly important because a similar and related mystical spirit reappeared, but during the reign of Alexander I.

Nikolai I. Novikov (1744-1818), well known for his successful literary efforts in early Russian journalism, became a member of the Free Masons of the English System in 1775.²³ In his satirical journalistic activities²⁴ he gave amplification to his basic convictions, namely that moral justice must be the foundation of all social relationships, and that the social evils of his time were due to insufficient or deficient education. He was instrumental in founding libraries and also published 440 books.²⁵ In addition he translated mystic literature, and brought Jakob Boehme's works before Russian readers for the first time.

After the union of the two currents of Masonry in Russia headed by Jelagin and Reichel, Novikov pushed further in search of "True Masonry". In 1775 Novikov had stood at the crossroads, one direction led to French materialism, in his opinion an evil and infectious philosophy opposed to religion, and the other led to the church, replete with superficial externalism of ceremony. His entrance into the ranks of the "Kamenshchiki" (Masons) marked a new departure, into a realm where the Enlightenment could flourish in the name of God and morality. Once a member, Novikov steered directly into the Rosenkreuzer camp. Baron Schwartz, who had come to Moscow to spread the Martinist Doctrine, accelerated an already widespread swing to mystic Deism on the part of those men in Russia who had had enough of the Encyclopedists. I. V. Lopukhin (1756-1816), a renegade from the Voltairian ranks, was the outstanding Russian spokesman for the Rosenkreuzer type of Masonry. He endeavored to synchronize his own program with that of the Eastern Church, to satisfy the romantic desires among his followers that they should become morally sound humanitarian enlighteners, and at the same time attack the destructive systems of liberty and equality arising in France. Novikov and Lopukhin are important because they are typical of their time, and of so many other thinking Russians of Katherine's reign, for in their careers one can trace the consistent pattern of growing reaction to French Materialism that took place among the nobility after the quelling of the Pugatchov revolt.

Rosenkreuzer, or Martinist Doctrine was not atheistic, but an "Ueberkonfessionelle mystische Christlichkeit". Here was not a denial of God, but a timid protest against an overbearing state controlled church. Katherine had Novikov arrested in 1792 and at the same time ordered Masonry out of existence. Novikov remained in prison until he was released by Paul I in 1797.

Alexander N. Radishchev (1749-1802) has been given credit for being the first Martyr of the Russian Revolution. The prominence he gained was largely due to his being more resolute in his position than his fellows who fled at the first rumor of the French Revolution. Radishchev attended the University of Leipzig and returned after several years to Russia in 1771. During the time he spent abroad, he succeeded in becoming well acquainted with the ideology of the French Enlightenment and particularly with the writings of J. J. Rousseau. Upon his return he was disappointed to learn that the Empress Katherine considered the intellectual advancement of the day as a mere plaything, brought to her court for her own diversion. While the majority of the nobility gradually became aware of the threat to their positions, their democratic dreams slowly but surely deteriorated. Radishchev is representative of a small number of Russians who were firmly convinced of the inherent value of enlightened philosophy for Russia.

In 1790 he expressed his pent up thoughts, and the ideas of others like him in a small book innocently entitled, "A Journey from Petersburg to Moscow". It contained a concentrated and lashing attack upon serfdom and the political system that sanctioned the existence of such an evil. Radishchev was promptly imprisoned on orders from Katherine, who condemned him for being filled with the "French error", as being a foe of the state, and finally of being an "absolute deist". On such charges the court read the death penalty to Radishchev. He broke under the strain and his sentence was commuted to imprisonment at Ilimen in Siberia. At the accession of Paul, Radishchev returned; and when Alexander I gained the throne, he was given full pardon. Radishchev turned his attention to governmental reforms with his is former zeal but was rebuffed and threatened by his more conservative colleagues. "Posterity will avenge me". were his last written words before he committed suicide in 1802.

The battle against the earthly despots was a losing one, for few men indeed could afford to express themselves under such prohibitive conditions. Those Russians who continued the tradition of Radishchev realized that little could be accomplished by direct assault of terrestrial power in pursuit of an active program of eradicating social injustice and so turned their attention to the heavenly powers in whose name the kings and princes rule. The following is a quotation from Marx written some years later, which describes the transition from direct attack upon political power to indirect attack through atheism. "The critique of heaven was thus transformed into a critique of the earth, the critique of religion into a critique of law, the critique of theology into the critique of politics."²⁸

In the life and work of Radishchev one dominant facet of the activities of the growing Russian intelligentsia is clear. That is, namely, the tendency of immediate and direct application of the speculative and abstract, to the

practical, and tangible problems of human society. This was due primarily to the fact that the social problems in Russia posed a challenge to the thinkers of the day. Because of the prominence of this problem in everyone's minds, and because the fate of the whole nation depended upon its outcome, we can understand somewhat the reason for the persistent importation of western produced philosophical systems in the hope that their contents might prove to be the universal panacea, and too as a result of this, why independent and original Russian thought took so long in developing. Radishchev, and the men who followed him in the years to come, worked under severe pressures. The evils which surrounded the institution of serfdom demanded immediate attention, and so did the problem of finding firm ground from which to deploy an attack against these evils. The preoccupation of most minds with the practical remedies of the social problem led to the neglect of basic thought. The lack of an original and independent ideological basis constituted a pressure in itself upon those who chose to battle in the social arena. The importance of a basis seemed, to them, secondary to the problems that lay in plain sight before everyone. The tendency of adopting a succession of western philosophical systems to serve as "make do" foundations for political and social action was an act of grasping at straws in desperation and with hope.

4. The Decembrists

On the 14th to 26th of December 1825, during a curious interregnum following the death of Alexander I, a number of youthful nobly-born members of the guard led an uprising designed to shake the imperial power from the hands of the successor Nicholas. Within a few hours the Senate Square in St. Petersburg was swept clean with grape shot, and within six months the lives of the leaders were erased at the scaffold and their intimate followers evacuated to Siberia. So began the reign of Nicholas the First, that was to mean thirty years of unequalled oppression. In spite of the debacle of December 1825, the participants of this unsuccessful palace rebellion are justly called the pioneers of the Russian Revolutionary Movement which gathered increasing impetus from that time onward.

In 1796, the Empress Katherine died bringing to a close a glittering, ostentatious, and hectic career. The shallowness of her character, her lack of purpose, and her fabulous vanity would lead one to wonder why this woman was called the "Great". The author does not challenge the title but wishes to point out simply that there are many types of Greatness. For example: the compact state organization founded by Peter was carried to even greater proportions by Katherine. Serfdom reached its greatest heights due to the efforts of Katherine. The freedom of conscience reached its greatest low in the closing years of her power.

Her son and successor Paul I was an embittered middle aged man, piqued by his mother's lengthy reign and the passing of his youth which might have been an advantage were he Emperor. Like Peter III, Paul was a "drill

master" ruler. His heavy hand reached out over the whole land, brutally repressing any suspicious movement among the people. His son, Alexander, was of different stuff than either Paul or his grandmother Katherine. The inner torment of such close contact with his power-mad father left indelible marks on Alexander's sensitive nature. La Harpe, the Swiss tutor commissioned to train the young man for his future responsibilities, exerted a constructive influence in his make-up by introducing him to many of the enlightened ideas of the day. In 1801, Paul I was found strangled in his chambers, the work of desperate group of officers. Alexander, the new Emperor, had known of the existence of the plot but had said nothing.

As if spring had come, everyone breathed more easily, the icy hardness of repression melted away for in their midst stood a promising and serious leader in the spring of his life. Men who lived in fear because of their convictions came into the open again to offer their services to the new Tsar. It seemed that a new day had dawned and relief was near. In the political arena Alexander established a liberal record in his earlier days. Novosiltsev set to work preparing the way for a constitution. The Tsar vowed never to grant crown peasants to serfdom, the administration was reorganized, Speransky set to work on the revision of the legal code, Poland was granted a constitution in 1814 and the Baltic serfs were set free without land in 1817-19.

Far more important as a prelude to the Decembrist episode were Alexander's cultural and spiritual efforts in the first decade of his power. Alexander became convinced that before a constitution could be granted, the country required an educated population, and to this end he did more than any other previous monarch to promote the establishment of schools and universities. The Institute of Pedagogy was founded in St. Petersburg and later grew to be a university. In addition, six universities were founded, retaining the Universities of Vilna and Dorpat. Forty-two classical secondary schools were created. The University Statute of 1804 was liberal, and based on self government. The success of this scheme owed much to the fact that the new educational system was patterned after French and Polish models.²⁷ The University of Moscow at the turn of the century received an invigorating impulse as a result of the influx of great numbers of German professors. It was during this period that Russian students first learned of Kant. The presentation of his philosophy was only average and considerably condensed, with great stress on the natural-law aspects of Kantianism.

In addition, the censorship was relaxed greatly which allowed the publication of more reading material and also permitted a republication of the suppressed articles written by the journalist and free mason Novikov. This one measure alone was almost enough to effect a successful transition of ideas from Novikov and Radishchev to the rising generation at the beginning of the XIXth century.

In 1804, Freemasonry was reborn in Russia and soon grew to considerable size with many lodges and multiple directions of activity. Alexander was sympathetic towards the general goals of masonry.

However in 1805, we find the beginnings of a new trend in the cultural

regrowth of intellectual Russia. In that year Golitsin was made High Prokuror of the Holy Synod. His own personal tendencies were towards the rationalism of the Enlightenment and within a peculiar sympathy for German Protestant pietism, which developed from rather intimate contact with various study groups of mystical coloring. Treatises of Boehme, Swedenborg, and others were read, Novikov's old works were republished; Jung-Stilling's and Eckartshausen's apocalyptic and mystic occultist works were studied. Alexander himself was introduced to this diverting phase of religious sentiment through the efforts of Golitsin. By 1811 the Tsar was instrumental in founding the Russian Bible Society, dedicated to the preaching of the Word by means of distributing the Scripture throughout the land. Instead of the archaic Slavic, these Bibles were printed in modern Russian to insure greater readability.

All in all this was a hopeful beginning: These were the years of childhood for most of the young officers of December 1825. It soon became evident that for all Alexander's liberalism he was deeply sentimental and lacked the one important prerequisite which could effect the realization of his dreams—firmness.

The year 1812 marks the date of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, and also marks the beginning of an adventure for the cream of Russia's young nobility. Here too, we can see the Tsar branching off in another direction from the liberal one he had previously followed. But for the youth it was victory and glory for Russia—and a chance to see for themselves the France of Voltaire and Rousseau, the Paris of the Revolution! To this handful of young officers, western Europe was a wonderland of personal freedom, constitutionalism, of tolerance and justice.²⁸ Great and subtle differences between France and Russia were quickly perceived by such acutely sensitive and inquiring minds. Many had already become acquainted with the French Enlightenment and the Encyclopedists through private reading, from their parents, from French refugees who had flooded Russia at the turn of the century and usually sought employment in well-to-do homes as tutors for the children, or from the newly founded universities.²⁹ A few individuals even went to England and there witnessed such strange phenomena as elections and the British Parliament, while the others dispersed themselves throughout Parisian society for the purpose of supplementing the progressive ideas already firmly established in their minds. The day soon came for them to return. They did so in the conviction that the Tsar would favor their plans for a constitutionally administered government, but in this they were severely disappointed, for the tide had turned.³⁰

Alexander, in the meantime, had entered Europe at the head of a conquering army, as a liberator. His sensitive soul had been injured by the trials of war and he was sincerely anxious to prevent another such war from disfiguring the face of the continent. During the stay in Paris he had occasion to meet with William Allen, the Quaker, the mystic Stilling and the Baroness Krudener, all of who exerted a great influence on the Tsar.³¹ This was in addition to the fact that the Tsar had already shown active interest in the mystical trends of Masonry which were manifest at the

time, and had also established the Bible Societies in Russia in 1811, which the Minister of Cults and two bishops of the Orthodox Church endorsed. Mingled with these semi-religious activities Alexander showed more than once an inclination towards the Catholic Church, and some even claim he died a Catholic. All of this points up one very important facet of Alexander's character, which became increasingly more prominent. That was his desire for religious experience, which brought him finally to a condition of mystical obscurantism.

Alexander had gradually become possessed by the idea that he was some kind of Tsar of Peace. This coupled with the impressions of the war against Napoleon and the Tsar's sympathetic inclination towards the wide assortment of pietists and mystics, must have prepared the way towards the religious conception of the Holy Alliance.

The Alliance itself was a personal contract between sovereigns to behave as brothers in the Christian sense and to treat their respective peoples as their children. For many of the signatories, the pact was but a joke. Metternich interpreted the alliance in such a way as to fit his own reactionary political schemes until the "Holy Alliance" became the symbol of patriarchal suppression as the league of sovereigns against peoples. For him this was but a religious umbrella to cover a reactionary ideology. By this then, any liberal undercurrent could not only be labeled as revolutionary but also as atheistic rebellion against the divine order of things in this world.

From this time onward Alexander sank ever deeper into the dark waters of obscurantism, whence his earlier mystic tendencies had led him.

The monk Photius rebuked the Tsar after his return to Russia for allowing non-confessional influences to come into Orthodox Russia. The Tsar literally fell to his knees in repentance. Photius stayed behind the throne for the rest of the reign in order to keep the Tsar within the bounds of official church policy. By 1822 the Tsar reluctantly ordered the Masonic Lodges closed. The Bible society lost ground until it was finally abolished in 1826.

Reaction against the newly founded universities was severe particularly against the study of German philosophy. Kantian philosophy had found its way into Russia during Katherine's reign, but had been promptly rooted out of the universities on the grounds that it was even more dangerous than Voltairianism. From 1804 until 1815 the many German professors in Russian universities taught Kantian philosophy and were unmolested. In addition they had branched out into Fichte's and Schelling's works. But after 1815, philosophers were hunted down as a threat to the existing order. The autocracies of heaven and earth could repel a cynical and sceptical Voltaire, but Kant represented concreteness. Professor Schad of the University of Kharkov was the first to be dismissed. Three professors of German philosophy in Kazan brought the following denunciation upon themselves from the Archbishop of Kaluga: "Kantian Philosophy has a two-fold goal: to destroy Christianity and to replace it not merely with deism but with complete atheism".³² The general deterioration of the universities is thus described by Pares: "In 1820, a 'converted'

free thinker, Magnitsky, now the most extravagant of pietists, was sent as commissioner to inspect Kazan university. He proposed to abolish it altogether, but Alexander preferred a reconstruction. Magnitsky ordered the professors to 'conform their teaching to the ideas expressed in the Holy Alliance', for which they were given the most minute instructions. History and Philosophy were to be based on the statements of the Bible and the Fathers; the biblical view, whatever that meant, was made obligatory in the teachings of physics and medicine; professors of mathematics were ordered to show the triangle as a symbol of the Trinity".³²

And so, the Prince Charming of 1801, the enlightened liberator had sunk to these obscure depths. But the younger generation who had tasted of liberty until 1815, and had seen for themselves the fabulous West, and had felt the crucial need for reform in Russia would not be put off. The course they must take would be revolutionary.

The beginning of oppressive measures in Russia marked by the conclusion of the Holy Alliance and the reaction to liberal ideas in general, led to the formation of secret societies as a means of providing shelter for those who entertained liberal sympathies. Freemasonry, which was introduced into Russia in the preceding century and had fallen prey to Katherine's "witch hunt" during her last years as Empress, was on the rise again but it had more the character of the old Illuminator lodges of revolutionary tendencies than the mild and conservative Masonry of Novikov's day. In 1815 the Grand Lodge Astrea was founded in St. Petersburg and by 1817 there were twelve lodges in Russia, one half of which were in the capital.³⁴ These lodge organizations provided the young members of the upper classes with their first opportunity to work openly for the betterment of Russian conditions. At the time, Masonry was permeated with the idealistic feelings of approaching self-perfection and of attaining a higher type of brotherly love but the Lodges did not last long as the framework within which the more ambitious personalities could function. The reasons for the abandonment of Masonry were: unconditional loyalty to the monarch,³⁵ officials of the government kept close watch on lodge activities and thus prohibited the exercise of free discussion; the charitable work of the Masons was negligible; and finally many were dissatisfied with the increasing tendency towards mysticism and the accompanying superfluous ritual. Those who at first transferred their center of operations from the lodges to outright secret political societies were largely those who had served in the war against Napoleon, the elite guard, the occupation officers, free thinking and liberal aristocrats. Although many men left the Masonic ranks the influence of the lodge life did not die altogether for its moral influence was lasting, for they had learned to organize, to work together, had learned a particular type of discipline, and had learned to know one another. The first society was called "Soyus Spaseniya" or the Union of Salvation.³⁶ This society had only 20 members generally in favor of the abolition of serfdom and the introduction of constitutional monarchy. Initiates into the organization were obliged to swear an oath on the Evangelium and the Cross.³⁷ This society lasted for less than a year and was dissolved prior to the foundation of a more

comprehensively thought out and larger organization. One of the main characteristics of the original organization was that it was a coalition of moderate and extreme political thinkers, but a unit because of the individuals' freedom of thought and love for the fatherland. Many members appeared shocked at the radical views of the extremists, and furthermore the government suspected their activities to be subversive. The Union of Salvation disappeared and in its place arose the "Soyus Blagodenstvia" in the fall of 1817. Much of the rawness had been mellowed in order that suspicion might not again be aroused. The Welfare Union had a life of four years during which time membership rose to a peak of 200. Many individuals attempted to achieve the grandiose objective of social welfare prescribed as the purpose of the organization, but few succeeded because such activity finds success only in joint action, which under the circumstances could not be, because of the secrecy involved. The Union of Welfare was based on the pattern of the old German Tugendbund. The constitution of the society resembles its German pattern closely except for its anti-monarchistic tendency. The Russian organization did not call for allegiance to the Emperor on the part of its members. The four fields in which the members were pledged to work were general enlightenment, justice, "Wohltätigkeit", and economy. In the fall of 1820 an event occurred that indirectly caused the break-up of the welfare society, namely, the mutiny of the Semenovskiy Regiment. The Tsar was in the midst of an international tangle at Troppau and was shocked by such indiscipline within the borders of his own country, the citadel of reaction. His ministers had kept him informed continually on all the moves of the society but Alexander chose not to disturb a nest he could observe so well, and would not destroy the ideas he himself had hatched. In January of 1821 the Soyus Blagodenstvia was dissolved because Colonel Pestel had been suddenly transferred to duty at Tulchin in the south of Russia and too because the diversity of opinion within the society was too great for the organization to contain. The more hardy members of the Sojus Blagodenstvia soon regrouped underground. From 1821, until the outbreak of the rising in 1825, the secret organizations of the south led by Pestel and of the north led by Ryleyev became more and more political in character as the Tsarist regime under the influence of Arakshcheyev and Photius became more repressive. Previously many members were content to discuss and argue the questions of religion, enlightenment, and human welfare, but in these underground years there was a steadily increasing desire to act through a direct political move and revolution.

It is a mistake to think that one can stereotype the Decembrists ideologically. Actually, one of the main reasons for the failure of the attempt was directly due to the fact that there was no one constructive program to which all members could agree.

It is from the records of the trial that we learn of the intentions of the organization, its lack of a strong theoretical core to which the members could give their allegiance, and the individual opinions of the various members who were before the court of inquiry. It must be remembered that due to the emotional feverishness on the part of the terrified

government officials, including Nicholas himself, who conducted the trial, testimonies of the accused were magnified out of all proportion. Fear, as the Russian proverb goes, has large eyes. On the other hand, many of the accused were not disposed to divulge information so badly wanted by the government at the time and so badly wanted by historians today, because of loyalty to their organization and great reluctance to betray their friends.³⁸

All of this shows that it would be risky to make too quick a judgment of the Decembrists, and that we should confine ourselves to individualities and attempt as well as possible to reconstruct the general feeling that existed at the time in as critical a way as possible.

The Union of the North and the Union of the South were successors to the defunct Union of Welfare and continued their activities separately and jointly up to the final outbreak. From the political viewpoint, the Northern Union reveals a more conservative character than its partner in Tulchin. The broad scheme upon which most of Ryleyev's and Nikita Muraviev's followers in the north were agreed was one of constitutional monarchy in which the Tsar's actions could be restrained, and a state idea embodying federative principles. English parliamentarianism served as their model.³⁹

In religious affairs, the northern group was largely indifferent. N. M. Muraviev was personally indifferent to Orthodoxy, but was in favor of retaining the connection of church and state because he felt that the church was necessary as a check against the masses and should be supported by the state to insure moral control. Such an opinion is in the best Voltairian tradition.

In the south however, there was a different over-all tone. Being so remote from the strict controls of the capital many of the members of the Southern Union felt uninhibited and free enough to swing over to an out and out Jacobin republican position advocating French revolutionary doctrine. It is in the Southern Union that we find a large measure of the anti-religiosity that came to light during the inquisition in 1826. The alliance with the first Pan-Slav group (Soyedinyennye Slavyane) and other bands of Polish malcontents served to accentuate the already extremist position taken by the Southern Union.

Pestel, commonly called the "brains" of the uprising, and the leader of the Southern Union, had spent years formulating his political ideology, which comes down to us in the form of his "Russkaya Pravda". He was determined to set up a strongly centralized and dictatorial government at least in the provisional state to be organized immediately following a successful overthrow of the Tsarist regime. It must be remembered that it was for such a provisional government that the "Russkaya Pravda" was designed, and not necessarily was it to serve as the final blueprint of the Russian government after equilibrium had been established. At least it gives us an insight into the nature of Pestel's ideas of government. Among the provisions he stipulates that the peasants were to be freed, all class distinctions abolished, a central government established with enforcement power, including spies and censorship to prevent a counter-revolution, half the land was to be divided in shares between the whole population,

and half was to remain in the hands of private enterprise.⁴⁰ Pestel also favored a close connection of church and state for he thought the Russian Church suited the nature of the Russian People.⁴¹

"Petel ist ganz Peter",⁴² for the church in his eyes could have had no existence outside of the state. In Pestel's plans for revision of the church he demands a halt to the authority of the "Black" (monastic) clergy over the "White" (non-monastic) clergy. And as for the sects he states that no clergyman, since he is a servant of the state, can be subject to the authority of any foreign power, which would nullify any possible growth of Roman Catholicism in Russia. Pestel made no secret of the fact that he was a Lutheran protestant, but as he said to Pushkin—"I have the heart of a materialist, but my mind refuses to follow it",⁴³ "mon coeur est materialiste, mais ma raison s'y refuse".

Pestel was drawn to the ideas of Destutt de Tracy, from whose book "*Commentaire sur l'esprit des Lois de Montesquieu*", he gleaned the great bulk of his political philosophy, as he explained to the court of inquiry. But this appears to be in direct contradiction to his doctrinal political stand. De Tracy opposed religious influences and the church as such, as the helpmate of absolutism. Like Peter again, Pestel saw in the close connection of church and state the means by which the church could be made an easily managed and efficient tool for the execution of his political program. It seems that if the church could have been made the helpmate of autocratic Tsars, it could be made the "honorary vice-president" in any totalitarian regime, God, no matter how little a despot may believe in Him, has often been accepted for His prestige value among the "uneducated masses".

The Northern and Southern Unions did have a unified plan of attack. A revolt was to break out in St. Petersburg to be supported in the South by Pestel, in order to seize the reins of government. Beyond this, unity and agreement disappear.

Atheistic thought was primarily evident in the Southern Union where attention was directed to the philosophies of the French materialists of the preceding century. The majority of the Decembrists in the south turned to the less abstract untheoretical problems of a political coup, and found in the French materialist teachings and the French Revolutionary tradition a natural affinity.

One of the most interesting cases of atheistic thought uncovered at the trial was that of one Kryukov of the Southern Union. He had read the works of Rousseau, Filangiere, and Montesquieu which produced in him a desire to know mankind better and learn what could make man happy. He began to doubt Christian dogma and was convinced that the Enlightenment contained that which had the power to make man happy and that religion was a hindrance to the attainment of the goal. At the trial he testified thus: "With flaming love of my country and not being strong in the Christian religion, I went boldly forward and began to refute bit by bit everything I found that didn't agree with the ideas I had at the time. At first I cast aside church ceremony as an abused custom which feeds superstition, then I began to doubt the Trinity as not understandable for

the human mind. The Lord, I thought in my blindness, gave us reason to know good and evil, consequently, reason in the only light that must guide us in this life, thus our first duty is to enlighten our reason, cleansing it of all prejudices. Therefore, justified in all this in which I myself wanted to believe, I opened the door to free thought.”⁴⁴ Kryukov continued: “The Evangelium teaches us to forgive our own personal enemies, but not the enemies of humanity.”⁴⁵ And again: “Feeling more fully the ignorance and slavery, I became more and more convinced that one general enlightenment could make man happy, and I was indignant of religious prejudice that hindered its propagation. The hope for the life to come ignores enlightenment, feeds the ego, promoted oppression, and prevents the people from seeing that there can be happiness on earth. Already religion appeared to me more harmful than useful. “—”For a long time I had not made up my mind to reject God. Finally, by giving life to matter, ascribing to chance all that existed in nature, I extinguished completely the small light of pure religion that was in me.”⁴⁶

The foregoing exhibits the effects of French materialist thought in Decembrists circles. While most of the other members concentrated on the political and social aspects of the French doctrine, Kryukov and a few like him, such as Peter Borisov of the “United Slavs”, took their religious doubts seriously and carried the results of western influence of that time to their ultimate depths. Materialism proved to them to be the justification of the revolution they sought to bring about.

Yakushkin is another example. Although he was more sceptic and no outright atheist, his words indirectly sketch the features of a decaying church. The Emperor, during his trial, instructed the Priest Stachii to go to Yakushkin. The Priest asked Yakushkin if he had taken communion and had confessed each year. For fifteen years he had not. Stachii suggested that his duties might have taken too much of his time, to which question Yakushkin frankly answered that time had nothing to do with it but that he simply disliked the ceremony and then announced that he was no Christian. When the Priest asked him what he expected in the next world he answered, “If you believe in the mercy of God, then you must be certain that we shall all be forgiven—even you, and I and my judges”.⁴⁷

Sergii Muraviev-Apostol of the Union of the South had officially denounced religion, but here was the author of the famous “Catechism of Free Men” in which the Bible was quoted in a way to serve the purposes of freedom for which the Decembrists were struggling. At the trial he was asked why he had so shamelessly distorted the Scriptures, and he admitted that he had recourse to the deities only for propagandistic purposes insisting that the Russians were so religious that seeing the Bible quoted in such a way it could not but bring about revolutionary results.⁴⁸

Throughout the Russian Revolutionary movement the catechetical form of instruction was a popular means of indoctrination, the most notable of which was the “Catechism of a Revolutionary” by Nechaev in 1869-70. Nikita Muraviev also had recourse to catechetical propaganda in his “Catechism of the Free man”.

Of the Decembrists there was one who is relatively obscure and would

have remained just another name on the register of those convicted and sent to Siberia for the 1825 attempt if it weren't for the fact that he represented, among the Decembrists, a newly developing trend towards the Germans rather than the French for cultural inspiration. This man was Wilhelm Kuechelbecker, a Russian of several generations in spite of his name. Kuechelbecker was impressed by the great literary revolution of the "Sturm und Drang" in Germany and showed an inclination of sympathy towards Schiller's idealistic patriotism. In 1820 he traveled to Germany and there he met Goethe. In the works of this genius, Kuechelbecker found a message proclaiming the freedom of man. He has been pointed out as one of the first real slavophiles because of his stress on Russian messianism in the manner of Herder's "Volksgeist". Pushkin, one of Kuechelbecker's close friends, was lauded because his poetic creation expressed the inner soul of the country and showed the way towards a great Russian destiny. During the years between 1823 and 1825 he became interested in the Philosophy of Schelling and joined Odoevsky in editing the short-lived periodical "Mnemozina". In this period he urged that Russia should take advantage of the great values which both Europe and Asia had to offer—but—that this should not be done in such a way as to lose the purely Russian national character.

It was in the 1820's that Schelling's philosophy supported by Vellansky, Galitch, Davydov, and Pavlov, gained a foothold in Russia. These men, their successors, such as Kireevsky, and the totally new orientation of ideas they represented are an important part of the whole picture of the Decembrist uprising since this youthful Schelling tradition formed a thin thread of continuity through the rapid transition into the Russia of Nicholas the First.

Although the preceding examples of atheist, sceptic, or indifferent attitudes towards religion would lead one to the easy conclusion that the Decembrist movement was inwardly atheist, as some present day writers would have us believe, it cannot be said that such was the case. Quite the contrary, "this first stage of the revolutionary movement must be recorded as one which still preserved contact with religion and considered the Church a necessary institution of organized society".⁴⁹ By the year 1825, atheist ideas in Russia had not yet crystalized into anything resembling ordered and philosophically grounded doctrine. Among the Decembrists we find only isolated cases of disbelief. The struggle was still primarily against a political adversary, the Tsar. The transition of aim from a political target to a more imposing and less dangerous prey, God and the Church, was only then just under way. Kryukov, Yakushkin, Pestel and others it must be remembered had managed to set religion to one side as far as they were personally concerned, but they did so in a completely "Enlightened" manner without serious intention of pursuing a course of militant atheism directed towards a universal abolition of God. Concerted efforts to bring about such an annihilation of religion did not appear until after the catastrophe of 1825, although the groundwork for such action had already been laid.

The year 1825 marks the end of an era, and the beginning of a new

period in Russia's history. In the government, led by the iron will of Nicholas I, there was an abrupt turn in policy. The gentry ceased to be the favored lieutenants of the Tsar after the rebellious nature of the young aristocrats became evident in the Decembrist uprising. Their places were taken by a hodge-podge of bureaucrats who were concerned more with the problems of rank and personal gain than with the exercise of their official functions. The Tsar was consistent, but it was consistency of oppression unlike the hectic and barometric careers of Katherine and Alexander. Herzen called the reign of Nicholas the "Pestzone". Any history of Russia will furnish the student with ample descriptions of this gruesome and stifling reign both on the international and the domestic scenes.

Among the people, there was no great change, but only an intensification of already existing injustice. Long military service, impoverished serfdom, arbitrary justice, famine and cholera were only a few of their burdens.

The gentry, as the bearer of new ideas, as the educated intelligentsia was no longer the only medium for the propagation of progressive and advanced thought either of western or slavophile orientation. The overwhelming ponderous mass of problems proved to be more than the transparently thin upper segment of society could bear, and, for this reason, crashed downward through successive levels until it ultimately reached the very depth of the social structure. The century-long activities of the Muraviev's, Trubetskoy's, Golovine's, Bestuchev's, Novikov's, and von Visen's came to an end. The themes they had introduced and could not cope with alone diffused into ever deepening and widening circles to be elaborated upon, distorted, improved, destroyed or, rebuilt by others such as Herzen, Gogol, Pushkin, Bakunin, Dostoevsky, Belinsky, and Chernishevsky. The problem of religion they inherited also and it is within this span of time that the student will perceive the initial formal development of Russia atheistic thought.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHIC AWAKENING



After the brilliant flare of the Decembrist explosion, Russia was plunged into the abysmal darkness of capricious absolutism. The government quickly transformed itself into an impersonal bureaucratic state where officials thought only of adorning their buttonholes and filling their pockets. The censorship was strengthened to such a pitch that creative writing of any kind was discouraged. Russia was the guiding force of the Eastern Bloc of autocratic powers in restoration European politics, and was pledged to stamp out liberalism anywhere and at anytime it might appear. Over half of the agricultural workers, the peasants, were in bondage to private landowners. The reign of Nicholas the First made Russia a sink-hole of oppression and a chamber of quiet terror. What is so remarkable about this period is the universal fruitfulness of thought. It was as if the prohibitive measures that were introduced to quell heretical ideas in politics and religion served only to add fuel to the fires; as if terror and fear of punishment eliminated great numbers of average thinkers, leaving only the more courageous minds to tell Russia's story. The intellectual and literary history of Russia during the pestilent thirty years of Nicholas' reign gives one the impression of a few great suns, unblurred in their brilliance against the dull and opaque background of the era.

Immediately before the Decembrist revolt, during Alexander's last years, there began to grow among small groups of students and university professors a deep interest in contemporary German philosophy, which continued to grow in spite of the macabre psychological depression at the beginning of Nicholas' reign. This newly acquired literary and intellectual energy began a trend that was to provide one of the few threads of continuity through the abrupt political changes in 1825 and 1826. But even this "thread" of continuity led through a radical transition: from the French traditions to the German idealist tradition. The dawn of a new day followed on the heels of the darkest hour of political and social tyranny, and soon thereafter, many of Russia's thinkers awoke to find before them an entirely new philosophic world. Theirs was a philosophic awakening, theirs was the discovery of a new foundation of thought and of a promise of a better world in which to live. Their Mecca was Germany, and Idealism their creed.

Who were these men of a new day in which the philosophy of the Germans proved to be the rising sun? What kind of an intelligentsia was this, and what were the outstanding features of this new group of

thinkers as a whole? Intellectual activity had long been accounted as the pastime of the well-born, the aristocrats. This type of aristocratic intelligentsia reached its high point in the Decembrist episode, but a change was in the making. After the debacle, the intelligentsia awoke to find among its intimate circle a number of interlopers of less exalted breeding, but of superior intellectual potentialities. The newcomers were, for lack of a better description, from a wide range of the middle class. Throughout the thirties and forties the "well-born" elements held their own, but gradually found themselves pushed more and more into the minority as increased numbers of the middle class emerged from the universities and into the arena of political and philosophic thought. Herzen and Belinsky are cases in point. The term used to describe these men in a country where everyone must be classified is the word "Raznotchintsi" which means "from various ranks" or "those of undefined rank". Perhaps this was a disparaging designation coined by the offended "high-rankers" to identify the conglomerate mass of thinkers who moved into their domains. Then again it may have been the simple result of the then (and now) prevailing desire to classify each by rank. At any rate the influx of non-aristocratic elements into the intellectual sphere bears witness to the fact that Russian social and philosophic problems had become too heavy for the aristocracy to carry unassisted, that these problems had become too critical for an increasing number of people to neglect.

The transformation of the intellectual world of Russia brought with it a transformation of outlook. When the aristocracy held the rudder, the attitude towards the people was one of benevolent guidance which was but a remnant of XVIII Century enlightenment mentality. The Decembrist revolt, engineered and conducted by the aristocracy, failed because the people were excluded from all action. The officers planned and fought *for* the people, but the revolt failed because it was not also *by* and *of* the people. The Raznotschintsi, coming as they did from a wider section of the population, brought with them the feeling of closer alliance with the people. They would act *with* the people and the people *with* them. They were inclined towards populism or narodnost. As more thinkers came from the people, the more the people gradually became the center of attention and source of energy. Briefly, the basis of Russian thought was being broadened, and to use the figure once again, it was being strengthened to sustain the weight of Russia's problem's which were already plunging downwards through successive layers of the social structure.

In such a land of repression, how could these men express themselves? Direct action was denied them because of government pressure, therefore the new intelligentsia had to remain still, to wait, to speak their opinions only to trusted friends, and to write only in the carefully couched language of poetry, satire, or literary criticism.

By far the most urgent problem of the time was the social problem and its ramifications. For all, the goal was the attainment of social justice, freedom, and recognition of the newly conceived rights of man. Though unified in general aim, the intelligentsia soon found itself torn by strife over the issues arising out of the means and methods for reaching the

grand objective. The social question, that is, man's relation to man, his relation to his servants, to his master, and to God, was ever in the foreground.

Once again, it was the West which provided the initial impulse that was to rouse Russia out of her slumber. This impulse should not be understood in the sense that if it were not for the erudite West the remainder of the world would still be dozing in apathetic slothfulness, but in the sense that the West, even in its imperfection, posed conflicting opinions which in turn set off parallel repercussions in all parts of the thinking world. The West, whether "followed" or "denied", was in the last analysis the vitally important second party which made a dialogue out of a monologue. From dialogue one extracts ideas but at the cost of strife. Fruition is dependent, however, upon the action taken by the individual. Though this may seem abstruse, it is designed to convey the idea that Russia was dependent upon the West but not in the sense that she was in bondage to the West. What the impulses were that originated in Europe at that time we well know. From France, there were the influences of St. Simon and Fourier; from Germany, the powerful Philosophies of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. The way in which these currents of thought were accepted in Russia, and the spirit in which the West as a whole was considered were the issues which split the newly formed intelligentsia into two contending factions. One camp adhered to the opinion that Russia should be reformed along Western lines, that the West had produced superior curatives which could easily be prescribed for the ills of native Russia. These were the Westernizers or "Zapadniki". There were Zapadniki of all shades, from those who simply regarded the West as the pioneer who broke the trail allowing his followers to develop the newly opened territory, to those who looked upon the West as an infallible supreme example. The Slavophiles generally opposed this entire range of attitudes. They believed that it would be unnecessary and detrimental for Russia to string along after the West. Russia ought rather improve her own existing institutions, which were already a part of her tradition. The Slavophile point of view must not be confused with the official state philosophy then being preached by Count Uvarov. Autocracy, Nationality, and Orthodoxy symbolized the official ideology of the day, and pictured the dismal entente cordiale which existed between a reactionary ruler and a reactionary church hierarchy. The Slavophiles took the same ingredients, but in different order and with opposite motives in order to brew their own particular Anschauung. Orthodoxy came first, which is indicative of the inherent religious nature of the Slavophile group. Then came Nationality, in the sense that the Slavs had their own place in the world of independent thought. Finally, Autocracy, but an autocracy compatible with the spirit of the foregoing concepts.

And here we have the external features of the new face of intellectual Russia at the dawn of a new era of thought. First the advent of the "Raznotchintsi" who signalized the eventual shattering of the aristocracy's monopoly of the intelligentsia; secondly, the beginning of a new attitude towards the people exemplified by "Narodnichestvo", and finally, the

splitting of the new intelligentsia into two factions over the issue of the West's role in Russia's intellectual life. Before turning to individual cases, we must gain some insight into the character which belonged to the profile just sketched.

By now we should be well enough acquainted with Russian thought prior to the Decembrist uprising to know that it was dominated by the French Encyclopedic thinking of the late XVIII Century and the more recent developments in political and social thought which arose out of the French Revolution. From this period we have extracted our own democratic traditions based on human rights, social justice, and so on. Beneath the surface, however, there lay a distinctly rationalist, and anthropocentric mentality. We have seen this come to light in European history in the form of a devaluation of God in favor of man. Traditional XVIII Century also contained a strong secular, even atheistic element revealed in the contention that man was to be made supreme at the expense of God, whose existence could not be proved. Yet, in spite of this, God was retained not for the leaders in thought but for those of the "herd" who had not yet become enlightened. There was a minority in the Russian intelligentsia who inclined towards mysticism, and were under the influence of early German speculative thought. These were the Masons. The Decembrist Uprising marked the end of French domination, and the rise of German influence not through the medium of Freemasonry, but in the universities were study of the new German idealistic philosophies was being pursued. The tendency towards the German model became more pronounced until it was ascendent over earlier French rationalism.

Why was speculative idealism and romanticism accepted in favor of the rational materialistic philosophy of the French? The social problem remained unchanged, and the political position of Russia had grown worse. The switch in the thought content of the intellectual groups in Russia can be explained as "unconscious strategy". It was a spontaneous shift in position, an intuitive move to more secure ground—the subtle movement to a different position from which to attack the same objective. All great movements of change in "Geistesgeschichte" involve this "unconscious strategy". But why the change? The strategy which French Philosophical thought engendered seemed too direct, too revolutionary, too obvious. Furthermore, the French themselves had made their revolution but had only emerged from it more entangled than before.

The Revolutionary Decembrists met with absolute defeat at the very beginning of their activity. All these items added up to failure. Under Nicholas the situation was too delicate and too precarious to gamble on success. Refuge was sought on the lofty and unattainable heights of contemplative speculation and abstract academic intangibility. But the objective remained unchanged. Man was to be lifted up, given his rights. God and reason with in history would perform this task of exaltation. God, peculiarly enough, played a leading role in this new scheme of things but this was primarily a God of Reason or a God of History, who eventually grew to be the inexorable God of scientific necessity sitting in glory and tyranny atop the methodical Tower of Babel that Hegel was to build. The God of the New Testament was subtly and treacherously compromised, to make room for

the exaltation of man, though this compromise was conceived in utmost sincerity, and in the best interests of man and God.

Very briefly, let us consider the earlier representatives of this new direction of thought in Russia. Kireevsky wrote, as he looked back upon the time when he was drawn by the philosophy of Schelling: "There was a time when the word 'Philosophy' had something rather magical about it. Rumors of the German 'Lovers of Wisdom' spread the report that there was some sort of newly-discovered America in the depths of human reason. These rumors awoke if not so much interest, then at least general curiosity. The younger generation especially sought greedily after some possibility of penetrating into that secret world."¹ Vladimir Odoevsky wrote: "At the beginning of the nineteenth century Schelling was what Christopher Columbus was in the fifteenth."² The philosophy of Schelling found solid footing first of all in the universities. A considerable number of professors had been to Germany themselves and had known Schelling and his followers personally, while others learned of Schelling through the many German professors that flooded the Russian universities during the Alexandrine period. Of these Russian educators the most important were: D. Vellansky (1774-1847), A. Galitsch (1783-1848), M. Pavlov (1792-1840), and I. Davydov (1794-1864). In some respects Schelling was not justly represented by the professors, but these men nevertheless accelerated the reception of Schelling's ideas in Russia by opening up to their students the broad vistas of speculative philosophy in a period when romanticism had begun to penetrate the very life of the Russian Intelligentsia.

One of the most important of these professors was M. Pavlov. His ex-student, Alexander Herzen, said of him: "After the teaching of philosophy had been abolished in 1826, Pavlov gave an Introduction to Philosophy in place of his scheduled lectures . . . Pavlov stood at the threshold of the physico-mathematical division and stopped the students with the question, 'You want to perceive Nature? What is perception (znatj), what is nature?'"³ And according to Annenkov, Pavlov could expound the philosophies of Schelling and Oken with that exceptional clearness which did not distract from the depth of the subject matter under discussion. He could extend the limits of his lectures to include the whole of philosophic contemplation.⁴

In addition to the universities, the literary circle or salon (Kruzhok) was also an important means of propagating the new philosophy. In 1823, S. Raitch founded a literary circle in Moscow, which included teachers and students of the Blagorodnii Pansion. From this large literary group a smaller, more compact and secret Kruzhok was founded which took the name "Obshchestvo Lybomudrov" (Lovers of Wisdom). Its purpose was to study the then current German idealist philosophy and particularly Schelling. So deeply entrenched in speculative philosophizing were they, that the elements of religious pathos were absorbed into the general milieu. Koshelyov relates the following: "The Christian teachings appeared to us applicable only to the great masses of the people, but not for us. Spinoza,

we valued greatly, and placed his works much higher than the Gospels or the Holy Scriptures".⁵ As a means to spread their views, the Lyubomudrie organized a periodical called the "Mnemosyne", but its contents were set on too high a plane for the ordinary potential reader to reach. It collapsed within a year. Odoevsky was its editor and in his articles he expounded the Schellingian ideas of universal synthesis, synthetic science, and attempted to prove the equality of the subject and the object in the absolute, from which position he developed the equality of the laws of aesthetics and the laws of nature.⁸ Odoevsky was a follower of Schelling but never did make the transition to Hegel as many of his colleagues did. Instead he moved into a period of mystic and pantheistic idealism, graduating from Schelling to the growing influence of Martinist ideas.

Another important member of the Lyubomudrov was Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856). He eventually became the leading spirit of the Slavophile movement. He studied Schelling carefully, and from Schelling took the right to make the transition from the philosophy of German idealism to mystic religion.⁷ In 1831, his periodical the "Yevropeyets" was closed down by the government. His article "The XIXth Century" bore the imprint of Schelling's influence. Schelling had solved the problem, and philosophy's goal was reached. That is, negative and logical philosophy was complete. What was needed was the abandonment of this logical understanding and the assumption of Faith and emotion. Apparently the goal of philosophy for him was the unification of philosophy and religion. The boundaries between religion and philosophy according to Schelling were indefinite and fluid, and for this reason Kireevsky hailed Schelling as being closest to the answer. Turning more and more away from the West after his trip to Germany in 1830, where he heard and disapproved of Hegel, Kireevsky altered his earlier concepts about religion and philosophy. He substituted Orthodoxy for the "Christian Faith" within the framework of Schelling's philosophy. This religiously orientated "Anschauung" which leaned towards the East was later matched by Chaadaev's contention that Christianity should mean Roman Catholicism and the resulting orientation towards the West. Kireevsky took the step over Schelling's fluid boundary on his own and found himself at the head of the religious Orthodox-Slavic trend of thought. It is strange, but true that the Slavophiles obtained nourishment from the West. Not only the dominant religious sentiment but also the Slavic spirit was awakened to consciousness by the West. Schelling himself told Odoevsky in 1842 that "Russia is a remarkable country . . . One can neither foretell her destiny nor predict what course she will follow. But Russia is appointed to something Great."⁸ Herder also found willing listeners in Russia. His praise of the Slavs served to stimulate an already existing messianist trait in the Russian national spirit. Fichte's patriotic idealism raised Russian hopes of soon being able to arrive at the center of the stage of World History. German influences were an exhilarating injection which awoke a latent quality in Russian consciousness. Through Schelling and his predecessors, the dormant Slavic-Orthodox feeling was aroused to give birth to Slavophilism.

Peter Chaadaev (1794-1856) falls into the same class as Kireevsky in that he too was intent on giving philosophy a religious tone. In his "Philosophical Letters" written in 1829, and published in Nadezhin's "Telescope" in 1836, we find his complete message. Its effect was like a "shot fired in the darkness of night . . . whatever the signal meant it certainly awoke one from his sleep."⁹ The "Apology of a Madman" was a reiteration of his views after Chaadaev had been declared officially insane by the government. Chaadaev pointed out that Russia's dreadful isolation, the social evils of the time, and the oppressive government of Nicholas the First were all traceable to the fact that Russia was divorced from the fountain-head of Christian culture, the Catholic Church. In Russia the fruits of Christianity had never ripened and never would as long as Russia remained apart from the Roman Catholic sources of spiritual fertility. Chaadaev based his philosophy in theology. Leading out from that starting point he constructed a social and cultural philosophy for Russia that emphasized complete physical and spiritual union with the West.

Chaadaev sparked the Westernizing elements of Russia into action, but not because there was widespread sympathy towards the Catholic Church. It was Chaadaev's secondary theme which caught their eyes and held their attention, namely, his outspoken condemnation of Russian backwardness, his call to action, and his spirited praise of the West. Kireevsky and Chaadaev were on common ground in that they coupled their respective philosophies to specific denominations within Christendom: Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. What is of special interest to us in this study on Russian atheism is that there were a number of Russians at this time who preferred to seek their religious inspiration *outside* of the Church, that there was within the growing Zapadniki camp a persistent attempt to remain free of confessional faith. Let us call this part of the Russian intelligentsia adherents of "Religious Secularization". The term is ambiguous, but it describes quite fittingly their general flight from the Church, but with religious motives! We shall see this presently as we get farther along in our account.

We have before us then the Slavophiles, who attached themselves to Orthodoxy; and Chaadaev, who according to similar motivation arrived at the opposite—Catholicism; and the great bulk of the Zapadniki, who followed the course of philosophic, secularized religion.

Russian philosophy has always concerned itself with the everyday problems of social behavior, of the practical in life, in history, but only in Russia have thinkers insisted upon linking these historical-philosophical problems with the basic question of all theologies. "Russian thinkers did not search any longer for the ultimate destiny, the origins or the core of history in the realm of the empirical, neither in abstract reflection, but in faith, intuition, and mystic speculation in something transcendental—God. Russian philosophy is religious throughout. It is eschatologically orientated and turns ever and again to theology—or to outspoken anti-theology, because all questions eventually reduce themselves to the last question concerning God and salvation."¹⁰

This single characteristic of Russian philosophy is of utmost importance

in the study of the "anti-theological" or atheistic elements of the XIX Century Russian intelligentsia. The persistence with which the eternal questions are brought to light, along with "either/or" answers to these questions and subsequent readjustment of complete Weltanschauungen according to the eternal decision makes quite clear the particularly maximalist character of Russian thinking. This same tendency has led to the opinion that all Russians are extremists, or that they love to "walk on the brink of a great precipice." True or not, it is nevertheless our task to study the careers of three men, all of whom were confronted with the ultimate question concerning God. First there was Belinsky; a "Hamlet" of sorts, not in that he could never make up his mind, but because he was eternally changing his mind.

CHAPTER III

VISSARION GRIGOREVITCH BELINSKY

(1810-1848)

Vissarion Belinsky was born May 30, 1810 in Sweaborg, where his father was a surgeon with the Baltic fleet. Upon terminating his tour of duty in the Navy, Grigor Belinsky moved to the town of Chembar in the province of Penza in 1816 with his family. From the very first the young surgeon found himself at odds with the townfolk of Chembar. The people suspected him because of his learning and he in turn held the community in contempt. Financial difficulties arose as his medical practice declined. Grigor gradually came to spend more time with drink than with his work or his family. All this meant insecurity, family strife, tension, and general unhappiness. As a boy, Belinsky was witness to much unpleasantness, including the sight of his father becoming more and more dependent upon alcohol. Years later Belinsky complained: "father couldn't endure suffering, he was abusive, degraded himself, nagged and was merciless. In the midst of my own family, I felt like a stranger."¹ By 1825, he had finished his grammar schooling and left to attend the gymnasium in Penza. There he became acquainted with Russian literature, studied French and German. German, however, was a language he was doomed never to master. Even in later years, when he was dependent on German writing for his ideas, he had to rely on others to do his translating. Apart from German, he did very well in school. Pypin records that he was known among his classmates as the "Philosopher".² Belinsky himself summarized these early years of schooling in his letter to Bakunin (26 II 1840) "I suffer from a horrid education. I reasoned at a time when one is supposed only to feel; I was an atheist and a blasphemer, not having as yet become religious; I composed before I was able to write between the lines of a copy book; I dreamed and used my imagination when others were learning their vocabularies."³

In the Autumn of 1829, Belinsky arrived in Moscow to attend the University on a government grant. In this first bit of freedom, Belinsky attended the theater and the ballet, and was ever short of funds. His mother wrote objecting to these extravagances, but Belinsky vehemently vetoed the suggestion of visiting the churches—even if it were free. Perhaps this is why Voronitsin summed up Belinsky's early years as follows: "Belinsky entered into life without any impeding traditions, without any faith. He became a practical atheist."⁴

A combination of Belinsky's love of the literary and lack of money, plus an idea led him to write a dramatic tale, "Dmitry Kalinin", which he finished in early 1831. The story itself is conventional and not literarily outstanding, but its message of protest against a slave society has kept it alive and worthy of notice. A wealth of experience from Belinsky's childhood years rose to expression in this drama—a drama centered about the innermost feelings of Vissarion (Kalinin) Belinsky.

In his letter to the Ivanov's (13 Jan. 1831) Belinsky wrote,

I finished my tragedy and you will soon have the pleasure of reading it in print. . . . A friend and myself, together with five other hermits organized a small literary society. This society pointed out the advantage of my finishing the tragedy, which without such encouragement would not otherwise have been written.⁵

This is Belinsky's first mention in his letters of a literary society, more than likely the embryo of the Kruzhok Stankevitcha. Belinsky submitted his drama to the censorship board of the university that operated in conjunction with the Third Division, and in February of 1831, he received the verdict. The play was *not* to be published. The final blow came that following September when he was expelled from the university and from the roll of students supported by the crown. What did this twenty year old student have on his mind that sent the censors into such fits of anxiety? What had Belinsky said to cause the ruin of his own university career?

Belinsky's dramatic tale is uncomplicated in form and follows the romance of Dmitry Kalinin with the daughter of a rich landowner, Lesinskaya. Dmitry came of a family of household servants, and while still a boy, the Lesinsky's decided to care for his upbringing. This brought him into close contact with Lesinsky's two sons and his daughter Sofia. Lesinsky was kindly disposed to his young foster son, but when the old man died, his widow became alarmed at the romance between her daughter and Dmitry. She took steps to separate them, to clear the way for the marriage of her daughter to a wealthy prince. Dmitry returned, and at a party at the Lesinsky estate, he was insulted by one of Sofia's brothers who called him a servant serf. A furious struggle ensued in which the brother was killed and Dmitry soon found himself in prison. He escaped to see Sofia once more, and they decided to do away with themselves. He stabbed her. Then he discovered a letter of his dead foster father's which revealed the fact that Dmitry was Lesinsky's illegitimate son. Dmitry was therefore guilty of incest, a murderer of his brother and his sister. He cursed his father, the whole world, and then stabbed himself..

The most obvious issue brought to light in this drama was the social problem. The widow, Lesinskaya, is the personification of the tyranny of men, an alloy of the many evils that exist in the society of men, and an executrix of the oppressive laws that make one man the slave of another. "When laws are in contradiction to the laws of nature and humanity, and to the law of his own reason, then man can and must violate these laws."⁶

The bitterness and the tragedy of the drama came to light in Dimitry's angry monologue:

Who created this ghastly law, which permits one man to subject other fellow creatures to the dictates of his power, to dispossess them of their sacred treasure—freedom? Who has made it legitimate to scoff at natural and human rights? The master may whip the skin from the back of his servant for his own amusement or diversion, sell him like a beast, or trade him for a dog, a horse or a cow, separate him for his whole life from his father, mother, sisters and brothers and all that which is dear and precious to him. Merciful God, Father of man, answer me! Did your all wise hand create on this world these serpents, these crocodiles and tigers who nourish themselves with the bones and flesh of those near to them, who drink, like water, their blood and tears?"⁷

The social motive in the above quotation is clear. In this respect it is in line with the tradition of the "Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow" by Radishchev, and is in sympathy with the ideas advanced by the Decembrists. But concurrent with this straightforward protest based on social motives one may detect ethical, philosophic, and religious implications as well. Here, are not only the evils of society but also the evils of the world. The tyranny of man brought another question to light concerning the possibility of a tyranny of God. The question that brings pathos into this drama, and into the life of Belinsky himself, is one that presents Divine Providence or God in contradistinction to the social and individual evils of men. How can this almighty Being exist, mankind being in such a deplorable state? And what kind of tyranny drove Kalinin to his tragic death? Belinsky gave two answers to the problem of placing the guilt. The first was that man himself was guilty of human tyranny, the second was that God was to blame as the tyrant against whom there is no defense. All of these conclusions appear in the last scenes of the play, after Dmitry's murder of Sofia. Addressing his dead father, Dmitry says, "I curse you, base slave of lust, I curse you and this miserable gift, this criminal life, which I have been obliged to follow because of you! I am a murderer, I am guilty of incest! I shall be condemned at a disgraceful execution—and all this I owe to you, my father."⁸ The father, then, is guilty. But what of Dmitry himself, twice a murderer and a suicide? Belinsky does not explicitly refer to Kalinin's share of the guilt in the drama itself but in a description of his hero which was included in a letter to his family dated 17 Feb. 1831. "The hero of my drama is a hot-headed fellow with savage and unbridled passions; his ideas of freedom, his insane behavior—brought him to his ruin."⁹ Thus the guilt indicated in these excerpts lies exclusively within the realm of the human: the father, and Dmitry himself. The initial premise for such condemnation lies in the assumption that God exists and that man has only himself to blame for his misery.

But the second answer turns the reverse side to view: Is God the tyrant and the guilty party while man is acquitted? This could also be, according to what is contained in the drama.

Thou, All-highest Being, tell me, have you been satisfied with my sufferings, were you amused at my torment, did you enjoy my grief,

did you become drunk on my bloody tears? Who made me a criminal? Can a feeble mortal avoid his appointed destiny? But who determines that fate? Oh, I know that riddle!¹⁰

Here is how that merciless court of judgment plays with weak mortals! No it seems that our dear Lord has leased his world to the devil!¹¹ That is the other side. The focal point is the social problem, more precisely, the institution of serfdom, but out of one eye Belinsky sees the evils arising out of the tyranny of man, and out of the other he sees the tyranny of God, or an authority out of reach of man and against whom there is no defense.

That Belinsky was an atheist at this time is an exaggeration. It would be more correct to say that he still believed in God but was piqued at His making this world the domain of the devil. Nevertheless, the seeds of disbelief were sown. Throughout the drama, Belinsky was aware of paradox, struggled mightily with the problem, and in the end could not bring himself to give *one* answer, but two. This youthful torment of Belinsky's is a striking parallel to the evolution of Ivan Karamasov's *Welanschauung*.

In the wealth of material that has appeared about Belinsky in recent years there is only scant mention of this "Dramatic Tale." It is described as a purely social protest against the tyranny of the land-owners, and the suppression of one class by another. In one place, Kalinin's monologue¹² is quoted in part without the plea to "Merciful God."¹³ In another place, Belinsky's letter to his father (17/11/1831) is quoted, "With all the warmth of heart, flaming love of truth, indignation of the soul, hate of injustice, I have presented in this work the living and actual tyranny of men, who seize for themselves that fatal and unjust right to torment their equals."¹⁴ The next sentence, which condemns Dmitry as the cause of his own ruin is not present in this work. Voronitsin, too, is evasive. He also prefers to stress the social aspects, and hoped to dismiss the subject by saying that "although Belinsky didn't give a direct answer, the reader is left without the slightest shade of doubt that Belinsky is very suspicious of the existence of God."¹⁵ Voronitsin comes closest to saying that Belinsky's concept of the guilt of tyranny was twofold, but he makes no further explanation.

In "Dmitry Kalinin", Belinsky the sceptic is seen, but certainly not Belinsky the outright atheist. Belinsky himself recognized the weakness of his drama as a literary piece¹⁶, but it still makes an excellent window through which we are able to observe the beginnings of the struggle that was to rage in Belinsky's soul until his death in 1848.

After the censorship of the drama, Belinsky spent the whole summer of 1831 in anxious suspense. He became ill. Then he was expelled in September on grounds of incapability and bad health. Deprived of support from the crown, Belinsky was forced to look for a job. After six months without success, he was finally given a position on the staff of Nadezhdin's journal "Molva" as a translator. This work gave him relief from poverty and a chance to mingle with the intellectual set that thrived in Moscow during that period. His most important contact was Stankevitch. Belinsky

began to shape his career as a literary critic, and at the same time became engrossed in the study of philosophy. "Dmitry Kalinin" was shelved as a literary venture, but the riddles which were presented there persisted. Belinsky turned to German romanticist philosophy for the answers to the questions concerning man, God and the world.

Many of Belinsky's contemporaries had the advantage of learning the rudiments of the newly revealed philosophic systems that originated in Germany from professors at the University of Moscow. Stankevitch was close to both Pavlov and Nadezhdin, while Herzen was attracted to the lectures of Pavlov. Belinsky was at the university for only one year, considering that the university was closed most of the winter of 1830-31 because of cholera, and that Belinsky was unable to attend classes during the spring and summer of 1831 because of illness. His lectures consisted mostly of Russian History, Literature, and languages. He did not hear Pavlov, and Nadezhdin had not yet begun to teach. Belinsky, then, began his study of philosophy when he began his work as a journalist.

Konstantin Aksakov's memoirs give a clue as to the approximate time of Belinsky's entry into the Kruzhok Stankevitcha. Aksakov met Stankevitch during the 1832-33 academic year. He was invited to join the circle and the first time he went, he found Belinsky there also.¹⁷

Neither Stankevitch nor his companions studied German idealist philosophy seriously during the years extending from 1831 to 1834, yet they became inured to this philosophic trend by the very air that they breathed. The raw material for their impromptu discussions which lasted for days on end came primarily from statements made by the hierarchy of Schelling's devotees most important of whom were Nadezhdin and Pavlov. The journals were full of the abstract terminology that one can find only in a German philosophic system.

Ivanov-Razumnik entitled his work on Belinsky "Velikia Iskania" (The Great Search). He says: "I do not know of two other words which illuminate Belinsky's whole life and activity more clearly."¹⁸ The philosophy of Schelling opened up to him a whole new field to investigate in the hope that he might find whatever he was looking for—a faith, a place in his soul where he could "hang his hat". Samarin described him thus:

His unfortunate facility of reception, the capability of understanding anything superficially and easily, the denial today of what he said yesterday, his enthusiasm for the novel, and the way in which he drove each new thought to the limit kept him in constant excitement which came to be acknowledged as his normal condition, and also stood in the way of the development of his talent.¹⁹

Odoyevsky characterized Belinsky, the philosopher, in this way:

In him there is a complete organic fusion of Schelling, Kant and Hegel. He could not read German and therefore read none of them. He picked up the fundamentals from discussion. I have never ceased to be astonished at the way in which Belinsky developed a whole philosophic world in his own way with such meagre knowledge of philosophy.²⁰

These characterizations of Belinsky are rather cool, yet they are to a cer-

tain extent true. What is lacking in an appreciation of or sympathy for the turmoil within him that showed itself as passionate enthusiasm, spontaneity, fire, impatience, and irritability. These traits of character are all-important if one is properly to grasp the true significance of this man, known as "*Furious Vissarion*".

Belinsky came into his own as a literary critic in 1834, when his series of ten essays were published in Nadezhdin's journal "*Molva*" under the title "*Literaturnia Mechtania*" (Literary Phantasies). The content is variegated with the bits of Schelling's philosophy, which Belinsky absorbed as a result of his contact with Stankevitch and Nadezhdin. Further traces of Belinsky's encounters with the religious, social, and philosophic problems introduced in "*Dmitry Kalinin*" are here detected. He seems to have discovered a new faith, an aesthetic one, based on philosophy. From the practical, tangible, everyday atmosphere of 1831, we find Belinsky in 1834 already plunged in the depths of the abstract and theoretical. For the next six years Belinsky trod the path of philosophy from Schelling and Kant to Fichte, and finally to Hegel.

W. Setschkareff has written a treatise on the influence of Schelling in Russian Literature during the first half of the XIX Century in which Belinsky's "Schelling Period" is discussed. Since Belinsky had not read Schelling in the original, one does not find so much "the influence of a single work, but a general Schelling mood. Very frequently, Belinsky laps over into Christian religiosity, which causes a break in his thought-process and has a disruptive effect."²² In matters of aesthetics, Belinsky followed the line dictated by Schelling very closely. "Poetic enthusiasm is a reflection of the creative power of Nature."²³ Art is the expression of the great idea of the All in its infinitely manifold manifestations."²⁴ "To portray the general life of Nature in words is the call of every true poet."²⁵ But in general thought about life and man and God, Belinsky wanders far afield, away from Schelling and away from the systematic guidance of Stankevitch. The "*Literaturnia Mechtania*" proclaimed the discovery of a new faith which Belinsky had found on the frontier between philosophy and religion. I shall quote this part extensively as it gives an insight into the *Weltanschauung* that succeeded Kalinin's.

This whole glorious world of God's is none other than the breath of an infinite Idea, which reveals itself in countless forms, as a lofty vista of absolute Unity in infinite multiplicity. Only man is able to perceive how great the body of this world soul is . . . It lives endlessly, creates to destroy, destroys to create . . .²⁶

So far so good. These words were uttered in proper pantheistic style, à la Schelling. But Belinsky seems to have been carried away into the realm of his own speculation when he continued in this manner:

God has created man and has given him understanding and feeling in order that he might be able to grasp this Idea through understanding and his knowledge, that he participate in this Life with living and warm accord, that he take part in the life of the Idea with a feeling of boundless, constructive love. Therefore the Idea is not merely wise, but loving. . . . The infinitely highest blessedness lies in the destruction of the Ego—in the feeling of Love.²⁷

Guided more by inner feeling and intuition than by the processes of systematic thought, Schelling's pronouncements on aesthetics graduated, in Belinsky's hands, into an independent idealist ethic. Whether this was done in a philosophic manner or not makes no difference when one considers that Belinsky was intent upon asserting his own methods for the liberation of intellectual thought and sound action.

We have passed judgment over everything, fought about everything, without ever having created anything ourselves. Others have gone to great trouble for us and we have taken only the ready-made and have exploited it: that is the secret of the rapidity of our development and the reason for our unbelievable unreliability.²⁸

In the "Literaturnia Mechtania" we see not only the young critic, but also a man who had found a new faith. Stankevitch wanted to harness the power of this man and divert his flow of ideas into philosophic channels. Belinsky's impulsive welding of philosophy and religion had displeased the clear-thinking Stankevitch, who strictly maintained that such a union could not come about and should remain as an ideal. To announce such a union prematurely would defeat the possibility of discovering a real union through hard work and clear thinking. When Belinsky's "Mechtania" appeared in print during the autumn of 1834, Stankevitch had already left the university and was busily at work in Voronezh studying Schelling. He returned to Moscow in January of 1835, where the Kruzhok gathered again to benefit from the studies that Stankevitch had made in the meantime.

In the spring of 1835, Stankevitch made the acquaintance of Michael Bakunin through his sister Lyubov, and their mutual friends, the Beyer's, of Moscow. Bakunin corresponded with Stankevitch throughout the summer, and Stankevitch made a visit to Premukhino (The Bakunin estate) in October. In December 1835, Bakunin came to Moscow and soon made the acquaintance of the older members. Other "initiates" included Botkin and Granovsky.²⁹

Belinsky did not meet Bakunin until the spring of 1836. This marked the beginning of a precarious friendship between the two, and the beginning of a general transition from Schelling and Kant to Fichte and later on to Hegel, the final philosophic wellspring of the Zapadnik Russian intellectual world of the late 1830's. In Bakunin's presence, Belinsky was ever aware of his deficiencies. He had been expelled from school, he was the son of a professional, he had to work to support himself. Yet, Belinsky still admired Bakunin in many ways in spite of his snobbishness, and patronizing condescension. From August till November, 1836, Belinsky was a guest of the Bakunin's at Premuchino. Fichte's "Answeisung zum seeligen Leben" permeated every thought, adding a roseate glow to the already idyllic summertime of high romanticism. Belinsky was no longer content to contemplate a dream of grand things as he had done before while under Schelling's influence. Now he was actively living a dream of higher reality. A short time after Belinsky's arrival at the Bakunin's he composed an article for the "Telescope", embodying his new attitude.

Every man must love mankind as the epitome of the full development

of that consciousness which is his own proper aim, so that what every man loves in mankind is the future development of his own consciousness. . . . In the distance, beyond the hills appears the horizon of the evening sky, and the soul dreams that in the solemn stillness it is contemplating the mystery of eternity, that it sees a new earth and a new heaven.³⁰

Premuchino itself seemed to symbolize Belinsky's visions of the paradise of unearthly reality. To Bakunin he wrote:

You raised me from the dead—by bringing me to Premuchino. My soul was softened, and it became accessible to healing impressions and healing truths. The harmony of Premuchino did not merely contribute to my resurrection; it was the chief cause of it.³¹

The publication of Chaadaev's "Philosophic Letters" in the October issue of the "Telescope" brought the dream world at Premuchino to collapse. The "Letters" invaded the cozy warmth of Fichtean romantic reverie like an icy draft of bitter and unwelcome harsh reality. Revolutionary impulses arose, which of course had little connection with the living of a dream. Jealousy arose between Bakunin and Belinsky over the attentions of Bakunin's sisters. Bakunin's father became angered at both his son and Belinsky for leading his daughters into frivolous ways of thinking. The dream crashed, and Fichte along with it. What of these unwanted realities of the world? What was one to do in the face of them? Enter—Hegel:

With the closing of the "Telescope", Belinsky's source of income was cut off. 1837 was a bad year. He published a grammar textbook out of desperation but failed to sell it. It was not until 1838 that he secured a position on the staff of the "Moscovskii Nablyudatel". Through this uncomfortable year he remained in close touch with his friend Bakunin, who at that time was haphazardly studying Hegel. Belinsky himself was turning more towards Hegel for inspiration.

My mind was tired of abstractions, and I yearned for the presence of something real. Hegel was a new step on the road to truth. Don't you see how I am made? Each one of my advances in life is a story, a beautiful, poetic tale with smiles but mostly a tale of tears and suffering.³²

Signs of transition in Belinsky's religious conceptions appeared in the summer of 1837 while he was traveling in the South of Russia.

There is a brotherhood among all men as Christ proclaimed, there is a relationship based on love and a striving to God, Love and Truth. God is not separated from the world, God is in the world, for He is everywhere. . . . Seek not God in temples made by man, but seek Him in your heart, seek Him in your love.³³

In conjunction with this religious-philosophic expression, Belinsky defended the source of his inspiration.

To be apostles of light, that is our calling. Let us imitate the disciples of Christ, who did not hatch conspiracies and did not form either secret or open political societies to spread the teachings of their divine master. . . . Germany is the new Jerusalem . . . Up to now, Christianity has been truth in contemplation, faith; now it must be-

come truth in consciousness, philosophy.³⁴

The most apparent characteristic of this religious tendency is its non-church aspect. While this same philosophy in the West intermingled easily with confessional and ecclesiastical views to the extent that Protestant theology became largely Hegelian, Hegelianism in Russia had the opposite effect of engendering an indifferent, if not antagonistic attitude towards the Church. Secondly, religion for Belinsky was becoming a part of a general idealistic frame of mind. Schelling had indicated the content of idealistic religion, but left it to the subject to cross the "fluid frontier" from philosophy to religion on his own. Contemplation was made synonymous with faith. Hegel on the other hand made it unnecessary to cross any boundaries since God Himself was incorporated into the System as a whole. Philosophy took the place of contemplation, and took the place of faith.

Confronted by the imposing structure of Hegelian idealist religious philosophy, gripped by the feeling that all was now answered, Belinsky cast himself into a complete Hegelian mentality. A crisis arose on the occasion of Lyubov Bakunin's untimely death. Belinsky reacted perfectly.

Is it possible that Christ came *only* to teach suffering in torment?

Those free of suffering are fortunate, but Lyubov? The general lives, but the individual perishes. Is that 'general' a Saturn, who eats up his own children? No. Without personal immortality of the soul, life is but a phantom. Ending? Nothing ends, but eternally develops. There are no dead! Only the dead bury the dead . . . I believe, I shall believe! Yes, God is living, and Lyubov is alive.³⁵

Immortality meant the reconciliation of the individual spirit with the General, the Idea, God. The inner ego was the essential, for this was held to be the part of a man's individuality that could never be allowed to suffer. Since the ego was viewed as eternal, there could be no suffering for it. With this, the spectre of unjust suffering was cancelled out for a time. Apparent injustice was considered as a part of the game since everyone could be assured of a steadily rising degree of happiness, of a new and better life through increasing consciousness of God. But for a moment, it seemed that the impersonal robot God of Hegel's design was somewhat cold and uncomfortable.

Kalinin was forgotten as Belinsky fervently declared:

Everything is the will of God. It is reality. I acknowledge a personal independent freedom, but I also acknowledge that supreme will. A clash is the result of crossing these two wills. I resist, fine; I perish, netchevo. I am a soldier of God. He commands; I march.³⁶

Belinsky gradually became more and more possessed by the idea of Hegelian reality, as expressed in the words:

Reality! I say to myself upon arising, and as I go to sleep, day and night. I feel it everywhere and in everything as well as in myself. . . . Reality is a monster armed with teeth of iron: whoever does not give himself freely, the monster will take by force . . . I repeat, reality is a monster with iron claws . . . Sooner or later it will devour anyone who stands opposed. There is only one way to find a fount of happiness in place of this dangerous giant and that is to be conscious

of its reality. . . . The word 'reality' has come to mean the same to me as the word 'God'.³⁷

Yes, a true christian is one for whom there is no more sorrow, no sin, no fear, and no more death on earth; while he is still on earth, he is already in heaven.³⁸

Each of the above excerpts expresses in various ways the peculiar concept that Belinsky had with regard to the familiar Hegelian formula. Hegel had purposely differentiated between the "real" and "apparently existing", in order to forestall at the beginning, the notion that everything that we see is reality and therefore rational. The rationality of reality could show itself only in the "positive" aspect of the reality involved. The positive nucleus was the determining factor. Even that which is negative, or apparently existing, carried within it a positive nucleus. In the dialectical process, the positive, the good, is recognized as a part of the ever-developing absolute Idea while the negative is reduced to nothingness. With Hegel, everything good always fights victoriously against evil, which agitates the battle and is eternally vanquished.

Since all that is rational has a pre-ordained position in world development then everything rational is real from the absolute standpoint. This is a direct result of the welding of world ideal with world substance in the concept of the Absolute which is developing in the world.³⁹

For Belinsky and many others, including Bakunin, Hegel's statement meant that everything existing was real and rational—and therefore good. All was directly glorified and brought into, or rather forced into absolute harmony. Unaware of the very special meaning of reality in the Hegelian glossary, Belinsky soon found himself confronted by a perplexing dilemma. On one hand, rationality had been exalted as absolute power, the governing force of the world. On the other hand, reality, the counterpart of rationality, was likewise exalted in its "directness". By "directness", Belinsky meant all that is real in the immediate sense, or as Stankevitch expressed it, "Kuechenwirklichkeit". What could the shabby reality which surrounded Belinsky in those days have to do with the glorious world process? As if resigned to the fact that he could not grasp everything at once, even if the whole affair seemed too grotesque, Belinsky found that the only way to keep going as an idealist was to subordinate himself to the commands of the objective general scheme. The misunderstanding of Hegel's concept of reality led Belinsky to become ever more suspicious of idealistic reality in general, although he chose at that time to go with the stream. He would try to be conscious of reality, he would hear the command and march, but still there was the lurking iron fanged monster waiting for his first mis-step.

In the fall of 1839, Belinsky was offered a new position on the staff of Kravevsky's St. Petersburg journal, "Otechestvennie Zapiski". From the quiet remoteness of Moscow, from the pleasant circle of friends, Belinsky was tossed into the seething cauldron of political and social St. Petersburg. He was stunned by the coldness and bitter realities of Russia under Nicholas the First. Belinsky remained the idealist, sought refuge in his

idealism, and in his idealist faith which did not admit of such evils in the world.

Doctrinaire Hegelianism was well on its way towards religious belief in Belinsky's mind. The peculiar tone of this belief is not hard to comprehend. The over-all pattern was objectivistic, rational, and optimistic. Faith in God, and belief in the revelation of God in Christ were replaced by a consciousness of the Idea, or "knowing" God, reality, or the truth. The true "Christian" knows no sin, no death, no fear, for these are cancelled out as negative unreality, having no place in an absolute scientific system that does not recognize the negative except as a means of attaining a higher synthesis, a higher positive good. Suffering and evil are accepted as necessary, in the assurance that such torment will be automatically nullified as a result of consciousness of the Idea and the simultaneous arrival upon a higher stage of reality. This type of Hegelian, idealistic, objectivistic and scientific religion is not unknown among us today. A very good example of this type of religious thought is Christian Science, which finds a number of its root tentacles in the Hegelian doctrine. "Belinsky's religious penetration borders for a while on fanaticism, or more correctly on the optimistic intoxication of Christian Science."⁴⁰

This last is brought out clearly by Belinsky's own appraisal of the religious message of the System.

German philosophy is a clear and mathematically exact development and explanation of the Christian message. Like that Christian teaching, this philosophy is based on the idea of love and the raising of man to divinity by way of consciousness.⁴¹

In an effort to present a definition of "Russian Reality", Belinsky began to work on what were later to be known as the "Borodino Articles".⁴² These articles, together with the critical work on "Menzel" were the high-water mark of Belinsky's Hegelianism, and the beginning of the end of Belinsky's purely philosophical interests. As we already know, Belinsky was obsessed by his own concept of reality as used in the Hegelian formula. We have also seen how wide of the mark Belinsky was. Reality for him was everything that existed, and in a pantheistic sense, God. He felt sure that his interpretation would hold water, and with this conviction he proceeded to apply his theory by attempting to define "Russian Reality" or more precisely, to justify the whole of autocratic Russia as she was at that moment. The following is representative.

In Russia, justice always goes before the people, it has always been a stellar guide for the highest designation of the people . . . In the Tsar is our freedom, because from him comes our new civilization, our enlightenment, even our lives. Every step forward by the people, every moment in their development is always an act of imperial power; but this power is not abstract or capricious because it is founded in the inscrutable will of Providence, with rational reality, wisely divined by the needs of the state, enclosed in it, without its own awareness and leading the people in full consciousness. Therefore, there can be no question of absolute obedience to the imperial power. . . . Unconditional obedience to imperial decree is not merely a necessity,

but is actually the most exalted poetry of our life, our Narodnostj.⁴³

Belinsky stressed the patriarchal theory of the rise of the Russian state, emphasized its organic growth, and resorted to the Pauline statement pointing out the fact that there is no other authority but God; then he added that the Tsar was the representative of God. In his theories regarding the identity of people and state he approached the stand taken by the reactionary Count Uvarov and, in some respects, the Slavophiles. Not all of this found root in Hegel. Much resemblance to Schelling is noted, particularly the character of history. Belinsky attempted an application of his theories concerning "real", "existent" reality, but succeeded only in complimenting the diabolical regime of Nicholas the First and disappointing his closest friends.

During the preceding two years, Belinsky had become imbued with the infallible, scientific objectivity of the Hegelian Weltanschauung. The individual, the subject, was inevitably subordinate to the lofty authority of the Absolute. The salvation of the individual lay in the willingness on the part of the individual to give himself over, or surrender himself, to this higher authority. As far as the dialectic method was concerned, Belinsky stressed the "Positive". The negative was evil, but necessary, therefore this "Negative" attitude must come to light on the part of the individual, but it should not be the sole occupation of the subject. When Belinsky attempted to bring his *own* concept of Hegel down to the level of the earth, he felt that something was not right. The banal life of St. Petersburg stared him in the face, while he expounded the blessedness of a regime whose nerve-center was St. Petersburg. He spoke easily of the magnificence of the Absolute, but soon became sensitive to the intimate conflicts that went on in the soul of the little man. Generalities versus particulars, object versus subject: these were the main causes of unrest in Belinsky's thinking after he had written his triad of articles proclaiming "Russian Reality". At first, these were works of calm assurance and methodical calculation, but on repeated consideration, objects of mounting horror.

The immediate effect of the "Borodino" articles was that of repulsion. Belinsky's intellectual friends were taken by surprise the moment they realized the reactionary tendencies of what Belinsky had written. Alexander Herzen had just then returned from exile, where he had an opportunity to study "Russian Reality" at close quarters, and entered into a struggle with Belinsky over the issues presented in the articles. Other friends shunned him. Bakunin did not come forward to explain that he had read the manuscripts and had agreed with the conclusions reached. Belinsky did not attempt to shift the responsibility. The articles show one trait of Belinsky's character very distinctly. He was governed by his ideas, not the master of them. He felt convinced that his interpretation of reality was valid, and being possessed with this idea he relentlessly drove it to its very limit.

All my convictions are strong, because I don't understand how to be half-way convinced. There are thoughts that live in me for only half an hour. How do they live? In such a way that when they leave me they must tear away my blood and nerves!⁴⁴

We must understand that Hegel's philosophic doctrine, as Belinsky knew it, had gained possession of his being. This was a faith. ("Reality came to mean the same as God to me.") Armed with this faith, he had sought justification of everything in this world. Within a few months, Belinsky saw that his idea had failed, that there was something terribly wrong with his faith. Here arose the struggle—a religious struggle—in Belinsky's soul.

By the early months of 1840 we find traces of a negative reaction. To Botkin he wrote: "And what do you say about my most stupid and far-fetched Borodino articles, which have charmed everyone?"⁴⁵ He had already fallen victim to the hardness of Petersburg life when he wrote in the same letter:

Oh, friend! you are in Moscow, and I am devil knows where. If I could come to Moscow, I would be only running away from Petersburg, not from myself. I do not know a clear minute. Faith in life, in the soul, in reality is put aside until better times, while disbelief and despair take their places.⁴⁶

After having unveiled the "truth" about Hegelian reality, Belinsky was appalled to find that he, as an individual and all individuals for that matter, must at once seek some kind of refuge from this all-devouring monster. Here he turned to the problem of the immortality of the individual. In the same letter to Botkin, he said: "My ideas about immortality have again been revised: Petersburg has the unusual virtue of turning one to Christianity."⁴⁷

One of the principal stumbling blocks in Hegel's system of philosophy, which justified everything but could not justify itself, arose over the question as to the fate of the individual, the subject. This inevitably brought the riddle of suffering into the limelight. In Belinsky's case, the demand for a solution of the problem of the individual, his suffering, his possible life in the hereafter, was more pressing than it would have been had he adopted the orthodox view on Hegel's concept of Reality. With Belinsky, the reaction was more violent, since his opinions on Reality were so extreme. Belinsky, by virtue of his adherence to an untenable position, found himself, after the crashing of his dreams; completely off balance, plagued by doubt, and completely immersed in human subjectivity. Belinsky lost faith in the objective rationality of this world as early as the February of 1840.

Life is a trap—and we are the mice. Some succeed in tearing away the bait and running from the snare, but most are caught. Life is a stupid farce, to the devil with it! We will drink and be merry if we can; today is ours, but there is no more recourse in our grief. The 'general' lives—we are mere shadows.⁴⁸

Actually, this is no direct break with German philosophy, but an acknowledgment of the futility of further struggle. This was dumb resignation to the inevitable. His idealism was under growing stress, giving away gradually to increasing pessimism.

At this time Belinsky scurried for cover as an oppressed individual, in the hope for eternal life. In another letter to Botkin (1/3/40), he said:

Friend, do you still say that pietism is better than pantheistic con-

structions of everlasting life? I agree. For me, the Gospels represent absolute truth, but immortality of the individual soul is its founding stone. Yes, one must often read the Gospels for only in them can one expect to find complete consolation. But on this score, it's either all or nothing. . . .⁴⁹

It seems that Belinsky had reached a temporary 'modus vivendi', not entirely relinquishing his idealism and not entirely accepting the invitation of Christianity. Here he had reached a precarious middle ground where objective and rational necessity in the world claimed its necessary victims and where these victims were offered eternal life for their trouble. But from the Christian standpoint, this was far from the "all or nothing" mode of approach. In July of 1840, after he received news of the unexpected death of his close friend and intellectual father, Stankevitch, Belinsky was shattered.

As in the case of Lyubov Bakunin, the death of Stankevitch came as a terrible shock. But Belinsky was already so agitated by the contradictions that existed between the "All-knowing Goodness" (Premudrii Blagost) of the objectivistic machinery of dialectical idealism and the accompanying misery of the individual wrought by this machine, that he plunged into battle against the Hegelian monster with human individualism as his battle flag. "The 'General'—the hangman of human individualism. The individual is enmeshed by terrible bonds and cursing the 'General' he serves it unwillingly."⁵⁰

The 'General' is the torturer, the individual is the victim. To Belinsky this situation was nothing short of incredible slavery, and right he was. The divinity that presented itself to Belinsky in the form of the Hegelian Absolute took on more and more the characteristics of a tyrant. At this point it will be interesting to revert to Dmitry Kalinin, and then we shall see that Kalinin was making a re-appearance after ten years of silence.

Is it possible that eternal blessedness is to be bought at the price of the most terrible suffering? That comes rather dear! Is it possible that that wise and merciful Being sends people to Earth as convicts are sent to prison? Could it be that His Grace is so limited that He does not want to make his supreme creation happy both in this life *and* in the hereafter?⁵¹

This is a remarkable parallel to Dostoyevsky Ivan Karamazov.

Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket.⁵²

Both Ivan Karamazov and Vissarion Belinsky were haunted by one and the same spectre—human suffering that was attributable to the tyranny of God, or to the Devil, who held the lease on the world, or to God that expects too much of man.

Belinsky was troubled by the thoughts of human suffering once more, ten years after he wrote "Kalinin". In his articles of 1840, Belinsky repeatedly asserted the worth of each human individual, but evinced neither signs of disbelief in the objective idealism of life nor in the rationality of

the world historical process. But the letters are indicative of growing lament and lost faith in that world and life which he had come to know through Hegel. Let us now turn to some of these letters leading to the ultimate break with Hegel.

In the letter to Botkin (12/8/40) Belinsky wrote: "Do you know? Botkin! Stankevitch has died!"⁵³ Shocked to the marrow, he continued to explain that the words hereafter and thence were now devoid of meaning, that

Then there was still howling and weeping, but now, with firm step they go arrogantly and silently into the jaws of death, and with a smile they tear out of their hearts all striving for something better and the purest devotions. I don't understand the reason for all this—we all die and rot away, so why love, believe, hope, suffer, strive and fear? Men die, nations die, even our planets die. Hegel and Shakespeare become as nothing. News of Stankevitch's death strengthens this conviction of mine. His death appeared to be more natural and necessary than blessed, exalted, genial. . . . What rubbish; a kalidoscopic play of oriental shadows. I deplore them.⁵⁴

Some ten days later, Belinsky wrote to other friends, (Efremov and K. Aksakov), and we can already note the effects that the sudden news of Stankevitch's death had on his mind. This is the way in which Belinsky characterized his views of the moment: "There is no faith, no knowledge, but doubt leads to conviction. . . . This idea has transformed life for me into a deadly void, into a gloomy kingdom of suffering and death. Death, death *there* is the actual God!"⁵⁵ On the same day he wrote to Aksakov: "Stankevitch is dead. And what is left of him? a wormy cadaver. In a word, the result is one and the same: Life, as you consider it with cold scrutiny, is such a stupid and empty farce!"⁵⁶ As if to make his inner revolution complete, Belinsky took opportunity in this same letter to discount his previous Uvarov, pseudo-slavophile opinions on "Russian Reality". "We are a people outside of society, because Russia has no society. We have no political, religious, or literary existence. Monotony, apathy, torment in fruitless bursts—that is our life! foul abominable, revolting—no strength, no endurance!"⁵⁷ Belinsky had thus thrown over Objective Reality and with it, "Russian Reality", so closely were the social and philosophical related in his mind. Where did this leave him? In pessimistic nihilism. Belinsky believed in nothing, and professed to know nothing. His only concern was to doubt and observe fact. Instead of cursing the bitterness of Petersburg life, Belinsky found himself indebted to it. "September, what a short time! and what a change. It is all 'Peter'—thanks to him; without Petersburg, I'd still be an enraptured fool and would not know that everything is —smoke."⁵⁸

The problem of human suffering still held its grip on Belinsky's mind when he exasperatingly exclaimed in utter hopelessness to Botkin (5/9/40) "All of the highly born creatures suffer—only the cattle are blissful, but even these along with the others must die, for such in the eternal law of reason. Aii! Reason!!!"⁵⁹ The only way out for the human individual seemed to be the possibility of eternal life, but Belinsky could not believe in eternal life.

I am engulfed by the idea of man's individual worth—and his bitter fate, a contradiction. M. Bakunin writes that Stankevitch believed in the immortality of the soul, Strauss and Werder believed. But it is not easy for me: all want to believe, and all do not believe.⁶⁰ By the end of the year, Belinsky had run full length from optimism to sceptical pessimism.

Life deceives me horribly; it is unscrupulous, treacherous. In the past, fantasy; in the present, slow death; in the future, decay and stench. Why couldn't I have died six months ago when I could still dream about—reality?⁶¹

The culmination of Belinsky's religious and philosophic crisis came in early 1841. I shall quote his letter to Botkin (1/3/41) extensively, for in it we can gain an insight into the character of the break with Hegel and also a sharp summing up of Belinsky's encounter with philosophy.

I have long suspected that the philosophy of Hegel was only a moment, a big one, but that the absolute nature of its results were of little use, that it is better to die, than to become reconciled to the system. For Hegel, the subject is not an end in itself, but the means to a momentary development of the absolute, but this absolute appears in its relationship to the subject as a Moloch, for after having made a show of itself in the subject, throws the subject away like an old pair of pants. In relation to the past, I have already been a follower of that same Hegel. All of Hegel's doctrine about morality are pure rubbish, for in an objective world order there is no sense of morality as there is no morality in objectivistic religion. The fate of the subject, the individual, the person is more important than the fate of the whole world or the well being of the Chinese Emperor. I am told: develop all the treasures of your soul for free delight in your soul, weep, that you may be comforted, mourn that you may be made happy, strive for perfection, ascend to the highest rung of the ladder of development,—but stumble—and fall—the hell with you for such a one was——. I thank you very much 'Egor Fedorovitch' I bow down to your philosophic nightcap; but with all due respect to your philosophical philistinism I have the honor of informing you that if it were given me to climb the highest rung in the ladder of development, even there I would ask to be rendered an account for all the victims of the circumstances of life and history, for all the victims of chance, of superstition, of the Inquisition, of Philip II and so on and so on. Otherwise I would fling myself down from that highest rung. I do not want happiness even as a gift unless I have peace of mind about my brothers by blood, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. They say that disharmony is a condition of harmony. Perhaps that is very pleasant and consoling for lovers of music, but it is certainly not for those to whom fate allots the part of expressing disharmony in their experience. . . . I am one of that number of people who sees in everything the tail of the devil, and this it seems is my final outlook on life, and shall probably be my philosophy when I die.⁶²

With one blow, Belinsky scattered Hegelian philosophy to the winds. All this was done in the name of the individual person intolerably burdened with his suffering. "For me, the individual person is higher than history, more exalted than society, greater than humanity."⁶³ Hegelian philosophy as such was not the only object of Belinsky's wrath. He also dashed to the ground the idealistic-religious part of that same philosophy. Hegel had shaped Belinsky's spiritual outlook on life, his whole optimistic religious fanaticism. Rationality and Reality were equated with Godhood; a remote promise of a glittering paradise was extended if only man would strive upwards in order to become conscious of this higher truth. Idealistic reality, whether conceived in the strict Hegelian sense or in the "directness" of the "Borodino" articles proved to be deception. The rationality of reality, in fact the whole of the impersonal established Hegelian order fell for the reason of its own defection and with it the deification of that order. Belinsky turned against Hegelian religiosity and in having done this, he is often described as an atheist. It is true that he ceased to believe in a "Higher Being", an "Absolute", in the fruits of endless fruitless striving after an illusion. All the talk of God and heaven meant nothing for no matter how well the System could justify everything, it could not justify itself. Thoughts of God and religious striving were merely thoughts bred in an atmosphere of effeminate contemplation. They had no basis in fact. These dreams were not reality, but only dreams. What Hegel neglected to mention, or could not mention, what Belinsky overlooked was the reality of Christ. Hegel's interpretation of Christianity was neither Christian nor Biblical but rather his own capricious distortion of Christianity into an idealistic "eternal world process". For Belinsky to have vehemently denied the impersonal God of Hegel is to his credit, for he recognized the artificiality of Hegel's God-construction. The tragedy of Belinsky's post-1841 thinking lay in his repeated failure to recognize the Truth of Christ's historical reality, coupled with the Truth of His Godhood. Belinsky's insistence on retaining the mechanics of idealism, but with varying content, continually prevented him from regarding Christianity as anything else but a fictitious illusory Hegelian other-worldliness.

Offended by the authoritative arrogance of Hegel's philosophy, and touched by the suffering of the individuals, Belinsky inclined ever more towards a kind of personalist socialism.

I am now in a new extreme: this is the idea of socialism . . .

The social spirit! There is my motto. What do I care if the Absolute lives, while the individual suffers? What is it to me that a genius already dwells in Heaven while the crowd wallows in filth? . . . I have become soured against all substantial principles in the nature of faith which bind the freedom of man! Repudiation is my God. My heroes in history were destroyers of the old: Luther, Voltaire, the terrorists, etc. For me the eighteenth century is more pleasant than (the Middle Ages) because it was the century of the downfall of religion. In the Middle Ages, heretics, freethinkers, and witches were burned at the stake; in the eighteenth they used the guillotine to chop off the heads of aristocrats, priests, and other enemies of God, reason and humanity.

There will come a time when no one will be burned, no one will have their heads cut off, when a criminal will pray for his own execution, but will not be executed, for life will be his execution as now is death; when there will be no more forms and ceremonies. No more rich, no more poor, neither ruler nor subject, instead there will be a brotherhood and according to the words of Paul, Christ gives His power to the Father, and the Father-Logos will reign again but over a new Heaven and a new earth. I do not deny the past, neither do I deny history—I see in history the necessary and rational development of the idea. I want a golden age!

This is a glorious idealist eschatological declaration, but in this case it is man who is the standard; man is society.

It is unfortunate that Belinsky added:

People are so stupid that you have to drag them to happiness by force.⁶⁴

This statement lends the foregoing appeal an overtone of unwanted and disenchanting despotic authority, and also contradicts what follows: "Reason and understanding; of this the worthiness of man is comprised".⁶⁵ The apocalyptic utopia portrayed by Belinsky has a definite religious flavor. In a sense he had discovered a new faith: socialism. Just as Hegel secularized and rationalized Christianity in his own way, Belinsky gave Christianity the same treatment but from the socialist standpoint. This is the inevitable result of all attempts to idealize Christianity, no matter what the basis. Still, Belinsky remained divorced from the Church. This is expressed in his preference for the anti-religious eighteenth century and his joy at the thought of the decapitated priest—the enemy of God, reason and humanity. To say this, he must have been defending what he thought to be true religion—secularized Christ-less Christianity, the idealized socialist utopia.

Ever searching for a solid basis for his socialist yearnings, Belinsky finally found a foot-hold in the divinity of man himself. He asked the pointed question: "What is man without God? Nothing . . . But what is this God if not the understanding of God by man?"⁶⁶ And here we find the first real traces of a new line of thought inspired by Ludwig Feuerbach. The advent of Feuerbach's revaluation of religion and Christianity came at a time when Belinsky was prepared in his own mind to accept the humanization of God or the anthropomorphic God on one hand and the glorification and deification of man on the other. Belinsky never read Feuerbach's works in the original, but had to be satisfied with translated excerpts. We need not delve deeply into Feuerbach's theories to understand the character of his message. As a matter of fact, the pattern is a familiar one that often appears in the minds of many present day "Christians" who consider God to be only what they "understand" Him to be—a projection of man's own yearnings, a God erected according to human standards! This God then is an illusion, for it is in man that we find the starting point, and it is man himself who ultimately is God unto himself.

Belinsky directed his faith to the individual. But could each man be God unto himself? If this is all God is, then God must be an illusion for who ever heard of God in human form?

In accepting socialism as a new "faith", Belinsky had therein become a revolutionary. That Belinsky became a revolutionary was largely due to Herzen's efforts in reinterpreting Hegel's philosophy in such a way as to make it an "Algebra of Revolution".⁶⁷ This movement was one that paralleled the growth of the "Left Hegelians" in Germany, a movement that gained added impetus after Feurbach's blasting of religion. Belinsky, who had extolled God, Tsar, Heroes and Nation and had later found reasons for suspecting the integrity of these qualities, found through the aid of Feuerbach that all of these were nothing but figments of the imagination—illusions. If the anthropomorphic God is forced from his heavenly throne by reason of his unreality then the throne of the Tsar will fall also.

Man, the master of his own destiny, and *Society*, comprised of men freed of illusion, would be thus in a condition of *revolt* against God and tyrannies of the earth to whom are attributed all the evils of this world. It was Belinsky's firm belief that socialism would bring man to a condition of completeness in a paradise on earth.

Belinsky's hallmark was contradiction. Never, in his career as a literary critic, did he once compose a systematic and coherent exposition of his views. In reading his letters, one is confronted with a hopeless maze of conflicting opinions and fervently expressed notions set at cross purposes. So far, the only solid line of continuity in Belinsky's life and ideas we found to be in his personality, in his sincerity, and intellectual honesty. Beyond that, chaos.

From 1842 onwards, Belinsky came to be known widely as an atheist. The basis for such opinion was, of course, his sensational revolt against Hegel plus his fanatical adherence to the newest trends of utopian socialism. At this time, Belinsky was influenced by both the current French Socialists and the representatives of the Left Hegelian movement in Germany. One should not underestimate the influence that Herzen had in shaping Belinsky's socialist and religious views.

Throughout the mid-forties, Belinsky continued to struggle against religion and God. He had the reputation of an atheist, he acted like one, and spoke like one. But external appearances belied the existence of severe contradictions in Belinsky's mind. Herzen recalled this episode in his memoirs.

During Holy Week, Belinsky came to dinner as a guest of friends and he found that the meal consisted of lenten dishes. 'Have you been pious for long?' he asked. 'Just on account of the servants', replied the host. Belinsky turned pale and said as he stood up, 'For their sake? On their account? Where are they? I'm going to tell them they are being fooled; each honorable burden is better and more human than such deception of the weak and unknowing, than this hypocrisy which would support ignorance. And you think you are a man of freedom. You stand on the same plane as the kings, priests, and planters. Good bye! I will not fast for the edification of others. I have no servants!'"⁶⁸

Thus spoke Belinsky, the atheist. But could not a believing Christian have

been moved to say the same thing? The entire situation is dialectic, and taken by itself can never be resolved.

In 1845, the young author of "Poor Folks" came to visit the great critic, Belinsky. Belinsky's imagination was fired by this work of great social import and he therefore decided to encourage this young man to write more. Dostoyevsky, years later, described the visit this way:

I do not in any wise exaggerate his impetuous inclination towards me. I found him to be a passionate socialist, and he began with atheism on me right away . . . As a socialist, he proceeded above all to depose Christianity; he knew that revolution must definitely begin with atheism. Without a doubt, he understood that if one takes away moral responsibility of the individual, his freedom is also taken away; but he believed with all his being that socialism not only does not destroy the freedom of the individual, but also will exalt the individual to unheard of greatness but upon new foundations. As a socialist, he had to destroy the teachings of Christ, to call this teaching an erroneous and ignorant philanthropy, which has been condemned by contemporary science and economic principles.⁶⁹

Dostoyevsky reported Belinsky as having said:

Yes, and do you know that it is impossible to charge man with sin, that he cannot be overwhelmed by guilt and burdened by the turned cheek, if our society is so faultily constructed as to make it impossible not to do evil—if one is led to crime for economic reasons, it is pointless and dreadful to require of man something which he cannot even fulfill on grounds of natural law—even if he should want to. . . .⁷⁰

Then moved to speculation on the probable outcome of a reappearance of Christ, Belinsky said: "Well yes, He would directly join the ranks of the socialists and follow them."⁷¹

1845 marked the peak of Belinsky's interest in utopian socialism. He had made a reputation for himself as a revolutionary socialist, and as an atheist. What a man's reputation is, is worthy of note; but there is the possibility that his reputation may be founded on a misunderstanding. I do not believe that Belinsky was an atheist towards Christianity at this time. That he was an atheist towards the type of idealistic religion proposed by Hegel is understandable. It is of utmost importance to know what Belinsky considered himself to be atheistic *against*. The finer theological aspects of this particular problem will be presented once we have a grasp of Belinsky's views on religion as presented in his letter to Gogol.

Belinsky made a long journey through Russia in the summer of 1846, and as a result he became more closely in touch with the Land of Nicholas I than he could have by sitting at his desk in Petersburg. Viewing the practical difficulties involved in promoting his utopian ideas, the impossibility of pressing the problems of Russia into a French mould, and the distressing backwardness of all Russia, it is believed that Belinsky learned much about his native land, but at the cost of utopian socialist dreams. The sudden realization of the shortcomings of utopian socialism as applied to Russia, toppled Belinsky's faith in socialism. Added strength of this conviction came after Belinsky's visit to Paris in the following

year, where he met the heroes of his socialist dreams, and was disappointed in their activities. Throughout 1846 and 1847 Belinsky was again plunged into a sea of pessimism similar to that which he survived in 1842 by attaching himself to utopian socialism.

Now as before Belinsky turned to the individual. But the individual, according to Belinsky in 1847 was considered as an individual in the strict sense of the word and was certainly not to be swamped out by humanity. Belinsky's last great article was published in 1847 (*View of Russian Literature in 1846*). Here he shook himself free of the utopists and declared Russia's problems to be her own; that society as such would not be the solver of these problems but individual persons within that society. Liberalism must be directed to the betterment of each man, and by this improvement society itself will become improved. This again is the ethical problem. What did Belinsky feel towards religion once his whole mental attitude had been so violently reorientated?

Belinsky's last word on religion is preserved in his famous "Letter to Gogol" of 3 July 1847. This blazing letter was "inspired" by Gogol's publication of the "Correspondence with Friends". The basic tone of Gogol's arguments was mystic pietism, allegiance to the national Church and to the Tsar. The people, he wrote, were profoundly religious and not amenable to the spurious advances made in the field of rationalist thought. Both Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi shared this opinion in part—especially regarding the inherent religious nature of the people. At the time Belinsky heard of his old friend's back-sliding, he was residing in Salzbrunn in Austria and quite out of reach of the all-seeing censorship. With unlimited opportunity to say what he thought, Belinsky pulled out all the stops and played his finale.

—One cannot remain silent when, under the cover of religion and the protection of a regime of the knute, lies and immorality are proclaimed as truth and virtue. . . . I believe that you know Russia very well, but only as an artist and not as a thinking man. I don't mean to say you are not a thinking man but simply that you have become accustomed to looking at Russia from a beautiful distance. From a distance one can easily see those things which he wants to see. . . . For this reason you have not perceived that Russia considers her salvation to lie neither in mysticism nor in asceticism, nor in pietism, but in progress, civilization, enlightenment and humanity. Russia needs neither preachers (she's heard enough of them) nor prayers (she's said enough of them), but the birth in the people of a feeling of worthiness, which for centuries has been lost in dirt and filth, she needs justice and laws, not those patterned by the Church but by healthy thinking and actual justice. . . . But instead, Russia presents the example of a land in which men deal in men, not even having rationalized such action as the sly American planters have done by simply maintaining that the negro is no man. . . .

Such are the questions which occupy all Russia in her apathetic slumber. And in this age a great author publishes a book which teaches the barbarious gentry in the name of Christ and the Church

how to squeeze more money out of the peasants, how to abuse them even more. And should that not arouse my wrath. . . . You then ask that one should believe in the good intentions of your book. No! if you had actually been filled with the truth of Christ and not the teaching of the devil, then you would not have written that in your new book. You would have told the land-owners that even the peasant is his brother in Christ and that one brother cannot be his brother's slave. . . .

And can this book be the outcome of some inner development, of spiritual inspiration? Impossible. Either you are sick and need medical attention or—I dare not speak this thought. A preacher of the knute, apostle of ignorance, a knight of obscurantism and blackest reaction—what are you doing? Look beneath your feet! You are standing on the brink of an abyss. That you find support for your ideas in the Orthodox Church, I can understand, for the Church has always been a champion of the knute and a supporter of despotism; but for what reason must you drag Christ into this affair? And what do you find to be in common between Him, and any, but particularly, the Orthodox Church? Was He not the first to proclaim freedom, equality, and brotherhood? And His teaching was the salvation of men only at that time while His teaching was not organized in the Church. The Church erected its hierarchy and thus became the defender of inequality, it flattered the powerful, and became the enemy of brotherhood amongst men and remains so until this day. The philosophic movement of the past century has brought Christ's teaching to light. Voltaire . . . is in a much higher sense a son of Christ . . . than all your "Popi", bishops, and patriarchs. . . . And do you not know that our clergy is held in contempt by Russian society and the Russian people? About whom does the Russian tell his smutty tale? About the priest, his wife, the priest's daughter and his workingman. Is not the Russian priest the symbol to all Russians of greediness, miserliness, servility, and shamelessness? And that you should not have known that! Curious. Your statement that the Russian people are the most religious on earth is a *LIE!* The basis of religion is pietism, devotion, and the fear of God. A Russian pronounces the name of God while scratching himself.

But look more closely and you will perceive what a deeply atheistic people it is by nature; there is still much superstition there but not a trace of religiosity. Superstition disappears with the success of civilization but religion often gets along quite well with civilization. Take France, where among the enlightened and educated there are many devout Catholics and many who denounced Christianity still clamp themselves stubbornly onto some kind of God. Not so, the Russians. Mystical exaltation is not part of their nature. . . . Religiosity has never given strength to the clergy, for the few isolated individuals who are the exception and distinguish themselves by cold ascetic contemplation can prove nothing. The majority of our clergy distinguish themselves by their fat bellies, pedantic scholasticism, and

appalling ignorance. . . . Religiosity has appeared only in our raskolnik sects, but their numbers are small. . . .

I will not sanction your affirmation of the loving bond between people and ruler. . . . I leave it to your conscience to conjure up the divine beauty of the autocrat, as seen from a distance, but up close he is not so pretty, not so safe. When a European is gripped by religious spirit, he becomes the opponent of unjust power just like the old Hebrew prophets who condemned the powerful lawlessness of the earth. With us it is different: when a man falls sick from a disease (called "mania religiosa" by the psychiatrists) he immediately strews more incense before the earthly God than the God in Heaven, and does so to such excess that, if he should want a reward for his slavish zeal he sees that by this he would compromise himself in the eyes of the community. A beast is our brother, the Russian.

. . . You have cleverly reached your conclusions and have sacrificed everything to the Byzantine God and left nothing for the Devil.

. . . The time for naive piety is over; also for our society. Our society already knows that it makes no difference where one prays and that only those who have never carried Christ in their hearts, or those who lost Him, seek Christ in Jerusalem. Whoever is capable of suffering when others suffer, to whomsoever it is grievous to behold the spectacle of the oppression of others than himself, he carries Christ in his breast and has no need of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The humility of which you speak is nothing new and smells of pride and of a scandalous debasing of your human worth. The thought of becoming some kind of abstract perfection, of rising above all by means of humility can only be the result of pride or plain feeble-mindedness, and in either case leads to hypocrisy, affected piety, and "Orientalism". You have grasped neither the spirit nor the form of Christianity in our time. It is not the truth of the Christian message that wafts forth from your book but a diseased fear of death, of the devil, and hell.

And here is my last word: if you have had the misfortune to disavow your really great works in a spirit of prideful humility, then you must now denounce this last book of yours with forthright humility and do penance for its publication by writing new books that might remind one of your old works.⁷²

This one letter poses a greater scramble of contradictions than any of his others. Most of the recent studies of Belinsky pass over this letter with bland equanimity, pausing only to remark that its atheist message is quite clear. Perhaps these scholars see more clearly than I do, or see only that which they are supposed to see. Because of the intense dialectical nature of this letter, one cannot judge the state of Belinsky's belief or disbelief objectively. Others, in reporting on this letter simply comment that it has a religious tone. I have not yet decided whether such authors over-rate or under-rate their occasional critical and many worshipping readers. The following analysis is designed principally to point up the letter's dialectical character, and to demonstrate on the basis of this the various ways in which a possible atheism was evinced, and to show in

what way the possibility of Belinsky's having had Christian faith was indicated.

To begin with, Belinsky's habitual anti-church trait came to light. In attacking the organized national Church, he denounced all the evils of the world from tyrannical government downwards. Belinsky's case against organized religion was just. By condemning the Church Belinsky can not be called an atheist. Kierkegaard, more closely allied to Belinsky than meets the eye, once wrote: "Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being aware of it. The consequence is that, if anything is to be done, one must try again to introduce Christianity to Christendom."⁷³ By saying that Gogol sacrificed everything to the Byzantine God, leaving nothing for the devil, Belinsky condensed his anti-church attitude into one stinging sentence. But by saying this he intimated that the Church was in the wrong, not because it was Christian but because it was no longer Christian. Proceeding further in this vein, we approach the first ambiguity: "Under the cover of religion, lies are proclaimed as truth." Out of context, this thought could be amplified into the traditional atheist maxim which asserts that all religion is a lie, and a pack of superstitions. But this would not reckon with the implication that religion was being *misused*. This is an important consideration, for Belinsky later asked why Christ had been dragged into Gogol's religious "pipe dream". Christ, he said, had proclaimed freedom but the Church defended oppression. Is it not amazing that Belinsky, an acknowledged hero of present day Russian atheism, came to the defence of Christ in the face of an aggressive and corrupt church? Pushing his own attack further, Belinsky expressed the opinion that, to him, Voltaire was much more a son of Christ than clergyman. To have called the great Deist a son of Christ is a surprise. On one hand, this might have been mere sarcasm designed to show how abysmally irreligious the clergy were. Then again Belinsky might have been deadly serious. We will recall that Belinsky once exclaimed that repudiation was his God. Listing the heroes of repudiation, he mentioned Luther and Voltaire. Repudiation in each case was directed against some injustice, having a strong and recognizable ethical flavor. He implied that the ethical good was somehow coupled with a true religious spirit such as that which the Old Testament prophets exercised in their righteous battles against earthly lawlessness.

Finally, what of the Russian people, their religious life and faith? Belinsky's assertion regarding the atheistic nature of the Russian people is very popular reading today. Because of this statement, Belinsky has been acclaimed an atheist pioneer. But here again is a neat bit of dialectic. Whether or not the people were atheistic, was and is a matter of opinion which cannot be determined one way or the other. Assuming that the people were atheistic as Belinsky did, the dialectic arises when one considers Belinsky's attitude towards atheism itself. He called the people superstitious, atheistic, and non-religious. Normal practice in acknowledged atheist circles is to couple superstition and religion, not superstition and atheism! The Russian religious maniac, who burned incense before the earthly god and not the God in Heaven, was considered a pagan and a

beast. Belinsky was not proud of such people. He was ashamed of them for their hypocrisy. Who was responsible for their deplorable state? The perverted official Church. For the Old Believers sect he had some kind words, but for the organized Church only ridicule and contempt. The Church had charmed the people into subservience, while it gradually divorced itself from God. As a result the people were lowered ever more deeply into a pit of superstition by the superstitious and atheistic Church. Dostoyevsky reproached Belinsky by claiming that he "peered at the Russian people through his fingers".⁷⁴ That could have been, but it is generally known that by peering through one's fingers a blurred object becomes more distinct. Belinsky laid the blame at the door of the diseased and decaying official Church which lay in the foul embrace of the established world order. He named the people the victims, for the corruption had touched them also, making them just such beasts and atheists as the leaders of the Church.

No matter how loudly the champions of modern atheism sing Belinsky's praises for having expressed his "Godlessness" so militantly in this letter, they can not drown out the fact that this letter was anti-religious only in that it was directed against the practices of a corrupted and degenerated Church. Fundamentally, the letter is of a religious nature, but its vehemence, wrath, and unrestrained vigor have given it an antagonistic tone which is not usually appropriate for expressing religious views. Furthermore, strange as it may seem, this is as close as Belinsky ever came in his short lifetime to expressing a genuine (non-Hegelian) opinion with regard to Christianity, even though Christianity was distorted to a certain degree.

In attempting to evaluate Belinsky's relationship to Christianity, two extremes must be avoided. To be objective is to miss the point; to be too subjective, in that another man's relation to Christ is seen in the light of one's Christian outlook, can easily lead to pious hypocrisy. Nevertheless, an appraisal is needed, and it must be risked. In the twenty years span extending from the early thirties to 1848, Belinsky accepted and then subsequently denied a number of religious views. Utmost care has been taken to present the known material bearing on this particular problem. If Belinsky's atheism in relation to Hegelian Christianity were in question, the problem would not be difficult to solve. Since Hegelian religion and Christianity cannot be equated, the problem immediately concentrated itself about the nature of Christian faith and the possibility of Belinsky's having recognized the nature of that faith as distinct from "faith" in Hegelianism.

Christian faith is a possible relationship between the individual person and Christ, the revelation of God in man and in history. This particular relationship cannot be static, but must be the result of man's own minute to minute decision with regard to Christ. For man to have such faith is a remarkable thing, for it can be lost the very next moment. There have been many objects of faith in the history of the world, but none quite as precarious as the faith one can have in Christ. Why is it that Christian faith is so delicate and yet so strong? Two words distinguish the nature of Christian faith from, say, faith in Hegelian Christianity: *How* and *what*. It is foolishness to define Christian faith as the adherence to specific

rules and regulations. Christianity cannot be comprehended as a charter or declaration to which a man affixes his signature in order to become a believer. If this were so, Christ would be unnecessary, and his existence on earth superfluous and meaningless. In Christ the extraordinary nature of Christian faith is exemplified. To the potential believer, Christ appears as a Paradox. Here was a Man, existing in time, real, and yet He is God! How grotesque that a man should be God, or that God should want to be man. He invited all to believe on Him, and as it were, even went Himself to seek out those who needed His help most of all, and suffered for them. But the invitation awakened a feeling of offense in the hearts of those He encountered. Christian faith lies in how the potential believer manages to overcome this feeling of being offended; how he can believe that the man Jesus is also Christ, the Son of God, how he can believe that God once walked this earth—visible to all and real—in spite of the foolishness of such an affair and the improbability of it. The "how" of believing does not become apparent until one recognizes the impossible paradox that Christ poses to the potential believer, a paradox to be solved by faith alone. That is the condition. If this condition is not present, true faith in Christ cannot ensue. If Christianity is distorted to the extent that the "how" of believing is disguised, overlooked, or hidden, it is no longer Christianity but an artificial antique paganism. It is the Church's mission to present this condition to all men, but the Church has not altogether succeeded. The so-called "Christian Philosophy" of Hegel had no place for Christ, for the idea that God should have become man was a philosophical abomination. In Belinsky's time, the paradox presented to man in the image of Christ was obscured and largely dismissed as an insult to human reason.

What then of atheism towards Christianity? Atheism, as well as faith, must be regarded as a reaction on man's part to the paradox of Christ's existence on earth. Where faith is the substance of things hoped for and the conviction of things unseen, atheism is the unwillingness to believe in Christ to the extent that one becomes antagonistic towards God and Christ in every way. The unwillingness to believe, or offense can lead in another direction, namely, that of compromise. The most common forms of this compromise are secularization of Christianity, rationalization, and romantic sentimentalization. This can happen as easily within the Church as out side it. Of atheism and compromise the latter is more damning. The recognition of the paradox presented to man, that God was man in Christ, is the condition which must precede both faith and disbelief whether it be atheism or lukewarm compromise. It is the task here to determine whether or not this condition existed in Belinsky's case.

It is a pity that so much stress has been laid on Belinsky's revolt from Hegel. On the strength of this alone, he has been branded an atheist. In Belinsky's "Atheism" of the mid-forties there was much of the tragic, and on the basis of the tragedy of his mistaken atheism present day apologists for mass atheism have made Belinsky their socialist-atheist hero. The tragedy lies in this: the conditions necessary for true faith or genuine disbelief in Christ were never expressed in Hegel's System, but the System

was recognized as the scientific and rational exposition of Christianity. Kierkegaard bitterly condemned the System as a sham, in that Christianity could not be objectively and rationally constructed. From this point onwards he successfully rescued Christianity from the cold and impersonal hands of the philosophers who had compromised Christ, and had led such men as Belinsky to abject despondency.

Belinsky's faith in Hegelian Christianity as well as his furious repudiation of all religion was, to use his own words: "A kaleidoscopic play of oriental shadows." Neither the faith nor the atheism were genuine, but Belinsky *thought* they were. The fall of Reality was followed by the fall of God. God was in His nebulous ivory tower—and so was Hegelian Reality. In an idealistic system such as Hegel's, God should be nowhere but at the top, in remote, powerful majesty. The "Borodino" articles showed ethereal reality (God) to be either a figment of the imagination or a bloody tyrant. With that, reality came to earth and God was dismissed. Had Belinsky realized that God is real in the most earthy sense—in Christ—the condition for an either/or decision would have dawned. But since the paradox of God's becoming man had no place in the System, since faith was degenerated to an act of subscribing to a number of "whats", the condition was absent. In this lies the menace of lukewarmness—the menace of an artificial scientific religion. Modern mass atheism has capitalized on the existence of such religious artificiality. It is ever a temptation for well-intentioned Christians to make Christ a more plausible figure in order to increase the flock, but in doing so, Christianity will always be robbed of its vitality. Christianity will be objectivised and petrified, becoming an easy target for those who aim at Christ's destruction. The thinking subject will first be deceived into thinking he has faith, then the enterprising atheist will come to correctly point out the actual folly of such faith, then deceive him in making him believe that his newly found atheism is against Christianity. The condition will be absent, and a tragic fools' paradise the outcome. This was Belinsky's position. There had been *no* confrontation with Christ, his atheism was but an aimless resentment of Hegel's System.

It was only after Belinsky's denunciation of Hegel's idealist interpretation of Christianity that Christ, the man, became prominent in his thought. First, in the utopian socialist period, Dostoyevsky reported that although Belinsky was vehemently atheistic, he would welcome Christ into the socialist ranks. Such words fall with a crash upon theological ears, since it was a revamped Marcionism. But this tendency must be recognized as Belinsky's realization that Christ did come to this world and that his presence here was not evil. The tyrant God and the innocent Son concept was another bit of Hegelian residue which was to be expected under the circumstances. Belinsky did become aware of Christ but the condition, the proposal that God and Christ are the same, was not clear and therefore no decision could be made.

The "Letter to Gogol", already extensively quoted is the best expression of Belinsky's religious outlook immediately prior to his death in 1848. At best it is an acknowledgment of the worth of Christianity in conjunction

with his own preconceived ideas of ethical good in the world. There was no outright confession of faith in the Truth that is Christ, nor an affirmation of belief in God. More stress was put on such ideas as "salvation lies in progress, civilization, enlightenment and humanity. . . . Russia needs justice and law, a birth in the people of a feeling of worthiness", all to be brought about by "healthy thinking and real justice." To Belinsky this moral Good was not to be associated with the Russian Tsar nor with the official Church. As if instinctively, Belinsky drew a sharp line of demarcation between official religion and what he thought religion should be. One might say that Belinsky had reached a point where religion was to be determined by its ethics. According to Kierkegaard in his "Stages on Life's Way", ethical religion precedes the complexities of paradoxical Religion—Christianity. Belinsky did attain a certain ethical religiosity. He was most sincere in his convictions, and the marked secularization of Christianity was to him an advantage. Through all of this, Belinsky never became aware of the paradoxical religious element of Christianity.

Belinsky died less than a year after he wrote the famous letter to Gogol. The impression that his entire life gives us is one of incompleteness. Here at the very end of his life, when his earlier impulsive ideas were becoming matured, a climax was reached. But this climax developed into tragic anti-climax, in that decision was left hanging in the air. Since he made no commitment, we have nothing to go on in deciding how Belinsky stood in relation to faith in Christ. Strangely enough, even though Belinsky neither arrived at a clear cut atheism, nor at a clear cut faith and to all appearances he seemed to tend towards a compromising attitude in relation to Christianity, we cannot be the judge of his salvation as a man. Faith has the dialectic of certainty and uncertainty within it, just as atheism contains the same dialectic. Just as the expression of faith is a moment by moment occurrence, so is denial. From the records that we have, proof one way or the other is impossible, in Belinsky's case. Their only indication is that Belinsky's thought was tending towards a secularization of Christianity, and a compromise with Christ. Outward appearances make this evident, but relying on Belinsky's own inherently non-compromising nature, his struggle to believe, his recognition of Christ in conflict with his non-willingness to recognize Him, lead us to believe that within his own being he was not indifferent and lukewarm. I refuse to judge him. All possibilities are present. It is my point to make clear that, on the basis of what faith is and what atheism is, a decision cannot be arrived at in regard to the state of Belinsky's soul. Here we can only pose the possibilities, but decide between them, we cannot.

The world has seen many examples of the presumptuous religious individual who is perfectly secure in his own God-relationship, flip-pantly assured of his own salvation, but self-importantly engaged in doubting the salvation of others and in offering to help them. However, I believe it would be a fitting expression of the genuinely religious attitude if the individual were to say: 'I do not doubt the salvation of any human being, the only one I have fears about is myself. Even when I see a man sink very low, I should never presume

to doubt his salvation; but if it were myself, I should doubtless have to suffer this terrible thought.'⁷⁵

Even though Belinsky would secularize Christianity, thus seek to compromise God, and then run the risk of being lukewarm in his attitude towards his own eternal happiness and towards God, we cannot declare him lukewarm, for his actions might have been dictated by a real interest in eternal happiness. In the possibility that he acted unwittingly lies the root of the basic tragedy of his relationship to the paradox. But let no man call him an atheist.

CHAPTER IV

MIKHAIL ALEXANDROVITCH BAKUNIN

(1814-1876)

Of all the early Russian revolutionaries, Bakunin is perhaps the best known in the West. His activities as an agitator in the West European revolutions of 1848 and 1849 have already been extensively investigated. Students of Marx also have had occasion to take account of Bakunin, one of Marx's most bitter enemies. Particularly interesting is the fact that Bakunin, one of the most prominent figures in the Russian revolutionary movement, has of late been anathematized by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. During the decade following the October Revolution, Bakunin dwelt amongst the other "saints" in revolutionary grandeur. Since then, he has been purposely forgotten. This seems to be an echo of a statement made about Bakunin by one of his comrades of the Paris Revolution in 1848: "On the day of the revolution, he was invaluable, but after the victory of the revolution he would have to have been shot!" What made Bakunin such an offence to the old revolutionists and what now makes him unacceptable as a permanently embalmed Soviet saint, was Bakunin's persistent tendency towards anarchism, decentralization, his search for a human freedom devoid of all authority, whether it be God—or deified Marxism.

Bakunin was not the "Raznotchintsi" type. His social standing was high, he was nobly born and traces of his aristocratic temperment are to be found even in his most fanatically anti-aristocratic diatribes. His father was a well-to-do land owner, erudite and a man of the world. His mother was a Muravyov. They produced a brood of eleven children, of whom Mikhail was the eldest son. The cultured parents made it their personal responsibility to see that all of their children were educated properly. The Bakunin's were a respected and God-fearing family which exuded culture in all directions. In this pleasant atmosphere, enclosing the family home at Premukhino, young Mikhail spent his childhood. As was the custom among good families in those days, the father planned a career for his son in the service. In Russia, one could only "get ahead" if he were in the service, either civil or military. In 1828, the fourteen year old Mikhail was sent to the St. Petersburg Military School, where he was eventually to earn the epaulettes of an officer of artillery. The salient feature of Mikhail's childhood was his patrician upbringing. He was bright, and showed aptitude for study, especially mathematics. The keenness of his mind was later revealed in the agile way in which he

dealt with philosophic problems, and used the dialectic method with mathematical precision.

Mikhail Bakunin was to become one of the most prominent of the new Russian intelligentsia. Like Belinsky, he was to become a Zapadnik, but his entrance into Stankevitch's circle did not take place until the middle thirties owing to the fact that he was obliged to do military duty after he was commissioned in 1833. Bakunin's connection with the philosophic movement in Russia was affected in an intricate way. The Beyer family of Moscow were mutual acquaintances of both Stankevitch and the Bakunin's. It was sometime in early 1834 that Stankevitch met Mikhail's older sister, Lyubov, at the Beyer's home in Moscow. In March of the following year the newly returned veteran, Mikhail, was introduced to Stankevitch.¹

Belinsky had already published his famous series of articles (*Literaturnie Metchtanie*) and Stankevitch's *kruzhok* was engrossed in study of Schelling by this time. Bakunin had not attended the University of Moscow and was therefore not in a position to experience a direct exposure to either the predominant German idealist currents of thought or to the waning French socialist influence. In his military isolation, he was far removed from the university focal points of intellectual activity, but his time in the service was not wholly lost. He filled his leisure hours, which through his own efforts were made plentiful, with reading and the cultivation of interesting acquaintances. During the monotonous tour of duty in Vilna, he wrote to Sergii N. Muravyov (27/1/1835):

This doctor of the Second Artillery Brigade, Krasnopolsky, a former student of the University of Moscow and a devotee of German philosophy, is in correspondence with Vellansky. Physiology, natural science and German philosophy constitute the main branches of his learning; during leisure time we discussed Oken, Galitch, Vellansky and other representatives of the German school. Such was the circle in which I confined myself while in Vilna.²

His reading did not include any really serious philosophical work, but mostly journals, tracts, and interpretive writing in philosophy. Considering his age, it is enough to say he was interested in philosophy, and that his actual knowledge was, as must be expected, superficial. Bakunin's letter (7/5/1835) to the sisters of the Beyer family in Moscow sets the motif of his thinking prior to his entry into the *Kruzhok Stankevitcha*. In it the philosophic-religious elements are quite visible but also somewhat confused.

I am a man who is the product of circumstances, and the hand of God has written the Holy Word in my heart, which embraces my entire being: "Thou shalt not live for thyself". . . . What are the basic ideas of life? These: Love of one's fellow man, love for humanity, and the striving to the All: perfection. These three ideas are but various expressions of the creative, eternal, immortal Idea—the Idea of God. . . . The animal has become man by a divine spark. Man finds his goal in God and the means to it in nature. What of mankind? The Divine enclosed in matter. Its life is a striving for freedom, for union with the All.³

Bakunin goes on to say that many individuals are cut off from their spiritual source by the forces of matter and that by helping one another, these isolated elements of humanity will strengthen their Idea and thus help throw off the yoke of matter which prohibits mankind from approaching God. Above all, God and the Idea will eventually vanquish matter. Bakunin's mood was religious, and ethical. The path he had selected for himself was not the traditional path of religious thought but one of secular romanticist religiosity inspired by German Idealism.

One advantage that Bakunin had over some of his future colleagues in the intellectual world of the thirties and forties was his extremely good comprehension of the German language. The original German texts he read with ease, and his few translations from German into Russian were valuable at that time. Bakunin was therefore by no means retarded.

The friendship between Bakunin and Stankevitch became more closely knit after Stankevitch's visit to Premukhino (The Bakunin estate near Tver) in the fall of 1835. In defiance of his father's paternal advice, Bakunin set out for Moscow in December that same year to join Stankevitch and participate in the activities of his kruzhok. By this time, however, interest in Schelling was flagging, and Stankevitch had already turned to Kant. We assume that Bakunin was prepared for this new direction of thought by an excerpt from Stankevitch's letter to Neverov (4/11/1835): "Send me two copies of Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'—one for me and the other for Klyushnikov. Quickly please, for I've sent my own copy to Mishel."³⁵

With a good background, firm determination, and plenty of ambition, Bakunin turned toward Moscow. He had set his sails to the wind that was to take him far beyond that city, to carry him to Europe, to revolutions, to Siberia, around the world to new revolutionary activity and finally to a desolate old age and death in 1876 at the Arbeiter-Spital in Bern. Thus began the career of the man who was not born under a star, but under a comet, as Herzen so neatly put it.

Bakunin did not spend too much time with Kantian studies after his arrival in Moscow, for at this time the eyes of many were turning towards Fichte. In the early months of 1836, Bakunin was already far along in his study of Fichte. He had translated Fichte's "Von der Bestimmung des Gelehrten" and was reading "Die Anweisung zum Seeligen Leben". Bakunin's letter to his sisters (29/2/1836) preserves his mood of enthusiasm at the time when he first became seriously concerned with German philosophy. In it also there is that characteristic non-church religiosity which is the outstanding feature of both German Idealism and the bulk of the German inspired Russian Intelligentsia. Here are some parts of that letter:

His (Fichte's) basic idea is—Life is love, and the entire form and force of life consists of love and arises out of love. Reveal to me what you love, what you seek and strive for with all your desire when you hope to find true solace for yourself—and you have shown me your life thereby. What you love, that also you live. . . . To love, is to act under the influence of some idea, that is the nature of life. . . . But what is love? How often is this word used and profaned by petty meanings that man lends it! What is love in this world? The feeling

of reciprocal utility clothed in 32 oriental forms of etiquette. And love of humanity? The words learned by heart from the Evangelium: Love thy brother as thyself . . . Love of God? Fear of hell and a desire for a paradise.⁶

Bakunin proceeds to state his case against his father, who had just disengaged him "for ever" from the family because of Bakunin's determination to come to Moscow. The father is made the case in point for such petty concepts of love.

The goal of life, the object of true love is God. Not that God to whom one prays in church; not the God who man thinks he pleases by humiliating himself; not the God who stands outside the world to judge the quick and the dead—no! But the God that lives in humanity the God who becomes more exalted as man becomes more glorified; the God who spoke the holy words of the Evangelium through the mouth of Jesus Christ; the God who speaks through the poets. I am no sceptic, my faith is not weaker than yours, but my God is higher than yours, and He is the only goal that I have . . . Who has not suffered, can not love, can not be happy. I don't know whether you will understand me . . .⁷

Throughout the year of 1836, Bakunin was possessed by this exceedingly idealistic and subjectivistic pseudo-religious philosophy of life. Early in this year Bakunin made the acquaintance of Belinsky and the other members of the *kruzhok*. Stankevitch remained the guiding spirit of the group, but Bakunin rapidly rose to the position of the whip-holding overseer. He was like a lion. For reason of his dominating character, and fanatical conviction, his superior aptitude for foreign languages, Bakunin was well on the way to becoming the dictator of the *kruzhok*. Belinsky succumbed to his influence by the end of 1836, but never became his willing puppet.

In the preceding chapter the progression from one phase of German idealism to the next was dealt with. Fichte was the stepping stone to Hegel. It was Bakunin who introduced Hegel to the *kruzhok* in the beginning of 1837. Consider the Fichtean ideology expressed in the letter just quoted and one can at once perceive that this route had led into a blind alley. This ultra-subjectivistic romanticist tendency eventually excluded even the object of love, of necessity a "Du" or "Thou" in the form of God, by transforming God into an integral part of the subject, man. The ultimate result was self-love, self-worship, man-God. This kind of faith had a place within the traditional religious pattern, and was nourished by just those sentiments which opposed the idea of humiliation not only on man's part but also on the part of God's humiliation, in Christ. Worship of humanity, of progress, or individual capability to cope with all problems alone, and the pantheist route to man's own perfection which exploits the Glorified Christ, are all salient features of pseudo-religious idealist philosophy. With Fichte, it was the subject that mattered, but the subject became "ingrown". Hegel was to give this anarchical heterogeneity cohesion, muscle, movement and—a head.

Bakunin gradually became aware of the impossibility of the Fichtean scheme after he had succeeded in bringing the *kruzhok* over to his way of

thinking, though Fichtean activism persistently remained. Apathetically he wrote that he had lost the absolute love, which had been his entire existence, and that he was becoming a miserable and egoistic creature.⁸ When everything was at its blackest, Hegel was "discovered".

At the beginning of 1837, the first indications of transition in Bakunin's philosophic outlook became evident. Three letters of Bakunin's written to his sisters signalize the change. He proclaimed that his personal ego was destroyed, that life itself was life in the Absolute. This Absolute with which he identified himself was of an immovable and constant quality, having richness and beauty. A new outer world would be planned according to laws of human reason, which is also of a divine nature. Freedom is in God, and man must identify his will with the divine will. Nature and the world were to become conscious of themselves through man's efforts. There was an open route for man to follow in order to reach God and that was the unification of all men in love, friendship, art, science—and religion. This great union of all men Bakunin called the divine visible world, the Holy community, the Holy Church, the foundation of which was absolute love, and eternal life.⁹

Bakunin enlarged upon this great union of all men and the way to blissful harmony in his next letter to his sisters (20/2/1837). Here he touches on the method, the famous dialectic, which is the moving spirit of Hegelianism.

As Hegel said, [this is the first direct reference to Hegel in Bakunin's letters] ordinary harmony which we already possess is not the true harmony. It must endure contradictory storms and passionate struggle so that it may be destroyed so that man suffers, and that it may be erected anew through the aid of the idea. Man becomes really man, and he will build a more beautiful and more exalted divine temple than that which was destroyed by the tempests. From then on, this temple of absolute love need have no more fear of storms for it will have passed through all the stages of its development. Instinctive harmony will be reinstated in the harmony of thought.¹⁰

Bakunin was merely probing the edges of the Hegelian system. His earlier mystic coloring persisted in the form of the deification of man through the identification of man's will with God's. Serious work in Hegelian philosophy did not get under way until the summer of 1837. This involved persistent, but unsystematic study of the "Encyclopedia," "Religionsphilosophie", the "Phenomenologie" and later on a cursory glance at the "Rechtsphilosophie".¹¹ Aside from the purely philosophical change that Bakunin underwent, it is of greater importance for us to view the religious or theological by-products of this change. As a result of Bakunin's study of Hegel, his mood was no longer apathetic, but rose steadily to great peaks of religious optimism.

From "Moyi Zapiski", written by Bakunin during the autumn of 1837, we note the following:

Life is blessed. To live is to understand, and to understand is life. There is no evil, for all is good. All being is the life of the spirit, all is penetrated by the spirit, there is nothing but the spirit. Spirit is

absolute wisdom, freedom, love, blessedness. Natural man is a finite and limited moment in the life of the Absolute Life. The possibility (of absolute freedom) lies in man's consciousness. Consciousness is the means by which man lifts himself from his finite limitations to infinite being. The stage of consciousness is the stage of freedom, humanity, love, and blessedness. Only for mortal mind and unknowing thought do evil and unhappiness exist, but even within this thinking there lies the possibility and necessity of deliverance. Therefore evil does not exist, all is good; life is blissfulness.

All is alive, everything is animated by the spirit. Reality is the eternal life of God. The unknowing man also lives in this reality but he does not realize it, for him all is death, he sees it everywhere because his consciousness has not yet come to life. The more living a man, the more he is penetrated by the spirit, the more alive for him is reality and the closer he is to it. All that is real is rational. The Spirit is absolute power, the fountain-head of all omnipotence. Reality is its life. Mortal man is cut off from God, separated from reality; for him reality and the good are not identical; for him there is a difference between good and evil. Perhaps he is a moralistic man but certainly not a religious man, because he is a slave of reality, he fears it and hates it. Whoever despises reality and does not know reality, also hates and does not know God. Reality is the Will of God. In poetry, religion, and philosophy a great act of reconciliation between man and God is taking place. The religious man feels and believes that the Will of God is absolute and the only Good, 'Thy will be done', he says, though he does not understand for what reason the Will of God is actually real blessedness. The moralist point of view is the dualism between good and evil, the separation of man from God—and therefore from reality. For such a moralist evil exists along with good. Evil does not have any being for the religious man: he sees in it a phantom, death, restraint, all vanquished by the revelation of Christ. The religious man feels his own individual powerlessness, knowing that all power is of God, and expects from Him light and mercy. Mercy will disperse the mist that lies between man and the sun.

Philosophy is a human science as well as divine science, because it encloses within itself the power of Mercy: the cleansing of man's illusions and the union of man with God. Reality for the perfect, omnipotent man is the absolute good, the Will of God is his own conscious will.¹²

The tone of these notes is highly optimistic. Furthermore, we would not at all be wrong in maintaining that Hegel, thus interpreted, became the center of a spiritualistic religious faith for Bakunin. Belinsky also felt the exhilarating religiosity generated by this philosophy but he was by no means as fanatically optimistic as Bakunin. Bakunin's sunny interpretation of reality irritated Belinsky, who saw in reality an "iron taloned and iron jawed monster". The problem of reality was at the core of all their disagreements. The ill-fated "Borodino" articles Belinsky wrote seem to

have been the result of Bakunin's persistent goading. Bakunin went all the way in adopting Hegel's objectivistic absolutist philosophy, while Belinsky accepted but always seemed suspicious of it.

From the end of 1837 through the year 1838, Bakunin became more and more possessed by this idealistic-religious feeling.

Thought rips our spirit loose from the finite limitations of understanding and transfigures it into reason, for which there are no contradictions and everything is beautiful and good. . . . I have no fear of suffering, for suffering is a sign of forward movement, which movement is the sign of the living source of life. . . . I have a long and difficult path to follow before reaching my reality. I'm not afraid of it. The more negation, the more difficult the battle and the deeper the harmony and reconciliation.

I should change myself, I shall become a new transfigured man.¹³

While Bakunin was assiduously studying Hegel during the latter half of 1837, Stankevitch took leave of Russia and his friends in order to go to Germany to continue his philosophic investigations under the direct guidance of Hegel's successors. It was then, that Bakunin easily sidled into the chair left vacant by Stankevitch. The life of the *kruzhok* continued, but it was increasingly torn by inner conflicts of personalities, weakened by a growing suspicion of Hegel, and finally killed by a general revolt against philosophy and the exit of many members to the greener pastures of western Europe.

In comparison to Belinsky, Bakunin produced very little of a literary nature. His style of writing was pedantic, flat, unimaginative. To counteract all that was lacking of a purely literary nature, Bakunin had the ability to marshal his arguments and to present them in a mathematically precise way. Here was ponderous assurance, right or wrong, which was but the reflection of his direct, stubborn and dictatorial character. During the two years prior to leaving Russia in 1840, he wrote a series of articles, including an introduction to the "Gymnasiale Reden" of Hegel and two parts of an article entitled: "On Philosophy".

The "Introduction" is mainly concerned with presenting Bakunin's Hegelian view of "reality". "In life, all is beauty, all is good, and even suffering is necessary as a purgative of the spirit, as a transition of the spirit from darkness to light."¹⁴ Just as we saw in the study of Belinsky's Hegel period, "Reality" in the Hegelian formula meant "Life" as well. Bakunin attacked all those elements of the philosophical world that denied the rationality, and reality, of life. The advance was made primarily against the philosophers of the *Aufklärung*, and the older Russian intellectuals who held fast to the lessons of Diderot, Voltaire and others.

"Thinkers of the XVIIIth Century lost their sense of eternal values by grubbing about in the affairs of the material world. They could find no support for their thinking other than the ego, which is abstract and wraith-like as long as it stands opposed to reality."¹⁵

With the growth of the German Idealist school, Bakunin saw a gradual release from the bonds of the materialist French thought of the *éveillé* period. Kant and Fichte acted as an antidote to the French trend

but both tended towards the subject which produced egoism, self-love. Objectivity was destroyed. Schiller, however, started out as a subjectivist but gradually worked himself loose from ultra abstraction. "Every new year of his life was a step towards reconciliation with reality."¹⁶ Schiller marked the beginning of a rational philosophy which had as its purpose the concrete unification of the subject and object. Schelling gave the concept an absolute origin, and Hegel completed the struggle to attain reality. "The reconciliation with reality, in every relationship, and in every sphere of life is the great task of our time, and Hegel and Goethe are the leaders of this reconciliation, of return from death to life."¹⁷ Finally we come to Russian reality. Bakunin finished his introduction by addressing himself to his Russian colleagues:

Let us hope that the new generation shall come to feel its kinship to our magnificent Russian Reality, and that having given up all hollow pretensions to geniality, this generation should finally feel within itself the justified obligation to be Russian men in reality.¹⁸ (April, 1838)

The typical over-optimism in Bakunin's interpretation of reality and the tendency to rank reality with God show us that Bakunin was already on dangerous ground.

"On Philosophy" was written for the journal "Otchestvennie Zapiski", published September 4, 1840. It was intended to be the beginning of a series, but no more were published. Dmitry Chizhevsky gives us the prominent lines of thought contained in these articles in his work entitled "Gegel v Rossii". Bakunin persisted in his polemic against the empiricism of the XVIII Century which according to him was the union of philosophy, Godlessness, and liberalism. "Philosophy shall never be Godless and anarchical because the life of philosophy and its movement consist in a search for God in infinite, rational order."¹⁹ This empirical mode of thought was "abstract-finite". He turned against the theoreticians of Weltweisheit, calling them victims of an "abstract-infinite" fixation. In neither case can such a pursuit be called philosophy, for philosophy was the recognition of the unity of finite and infinite. "Philosophy, is the recognition of this concrete unity, absolute truth, which exists in the manifold and finite world of reality."²⁰ There was only one way for philosophy and that, speculation. By the year 1840, Bakunin was completely within the Hegelian camp.

It has not been my purpose to outline in full the complete and detailed Hegelian concepts that Bakunin popularized in these articles. That, I leave in the hands of Chizhevsky. What is of importance to us at this juncture is the fact that Bakunin studied Hegel seriously, comprehensively, and in an orderly and "philosophic" manner—as opposed to Belinsky. Secondly, the fact that Bakunin saw hope for Russia in following the speculative route to a better society, and finally that Hegel presented a much needed substitute for the traditional religion of Orthodox Christendom.

Hegelian philosophy, or any highly developed idealism which thoroughly and in a logical manner explains life, truth and God in terms of human aspiration, contains the seed of religion. This is not Christian religion,

but rather a peculiar type of religiosity which involves "self-realization" "God-realization". God, in such an instance, is man's fabrication. God is glorious, never humiliated; victorious truth, never crucified truth; reality of the throne, but not of the cross. His existence is irrefutably proven, and this is quite true, but paradoxically there is the suggestion that man also have faith. Sorrow and suffering are expertly dealt with by simply "knowing" that misery is actually to be welcomed as an aid to further man's approach to Wisdom, Reality, Truth, etc., etc. Optimistic confidence is the fundamental note, absolute confidence in man's ultimate deliverance from further misery after having reached the highest rung in the ladder *through his own efforts*. Fear and evil are assigned to the realm of nothingness. Their's is self-glorifying suffering, not the suffering with hope. Their's is the torment with *expectation* of final relief, not the suffering that ends as God's act of mercy. Their suffering is not even real for they declare themselves that evil, pain, and death are non-existent. This was an optimistic religious fabrication. Feuerbach was right when he said that religion (i. e. Hegelian) involves nothing more than the projection of man as he is to what man thinks he ought to be. This description fits the Hegelian philosophy, and pictures accurately the religious coloring of many addicts of this brand of thinking, including that of Bakunin and his associates.

Possibly, this judgment of idealistic religiosity is unduly harsh. It deserves to be mentioned here that the Hegelian philosophers of one hundred years ago were not alone in their views on life and God. Western Protestantism was also penetrated by the spirit of the System. Hegel, through the permutations and combinations arranged by Schleiermacher and others of like sympathy, even spoke from the pulpit. Orthodoxy, not amenable to these influences, remained within the pale of her own retrograde and decadent state-sponsored religious world from which many of the Slavophiles of Bakunin's time were trying to rescue it. In the West, this newly-hatched philosophical development, born of the time and later dictator of the period, succeeded in bringing the complete "Geistesleben" of much of northern Europe under its sway. From the theological point of view, the System was one of the most compromising manoeuvres of all time. Since the System had only partial influence in Russia, due to the all-powerful State Philosophy as conceived by Uvarov, allegiance to Hegelianism presupposed a break from the traditional Church, not on grounds of Godlessness, but out of an obligation to a "higher God". Due to the failure of the church in the west to hold fast to Christianity, and in the Church's compromise with Hegel, Christendom recruited many new "Christians" by riding the crest. In Russia, the Church had also miserably failed, but did not add to her many compromises, an entente cordiale with Hegel. As a result, Russian Christendom lost a number of her "Christians" to the System. Christianity was absent from official Christendom in both cases. But in Russia only, was it unmistakably clear that to be Hegelian was to be literally outside the Church, no matter how corrupted Christendom had become.

In Russia the issues were clearly defined, for the Church had not compromised its position by allying itself with the philosophic movement.

The issues were clearly cut. On one hand there was the Church; ultra-conservative, materialistic, a helpmate of a most reactionary civil government, perverter of the Evangelium, as Belinsky inferred, atheistic, and as Dostoyevsky later hinted in his tale of the Grand Inquisitor, a church devoted to the correction of Christ's works. On the other hand there was a new and comprehensive System which offered eternal paradise for man, a doctrine which could pass without too much trouble as Christian. It could rationally "explain" paradoxical problems of love and suffering, good and evil. Is it then no wonder that many of these men of Russia, thirsting for human justice, hungering for a better world in which to live, searching for the true God to lead them in this struggle should have retired from the traditional religious patterns dictated by the Orthodox Church and the oppressive regime of Nicholas the First? Is it no wonder that they gave themselves unconditionally to the System which held out so much promise to them in their distress? It is one of the most humanly normal things that could have happened. But suppose for instance that this new faith, the System, eventually led into a blind alley, or dialectically crushed the subject, or finally revealed itself as just that tyranny from which these men sought to escape by leaving the established Church. Would they not be obliged to fight the System or turn it to their own advantage, would they not feel extremely reluctant to return to the Church from which they had only too happily emancipated themselves? To remain true to their purpose of finding human freedom, they had to go on, but Godlessness became an inviting possibility.

In the early summer of 1840. Bakunin finally succeeded in obtaining an exit permit and funds to allow him to leave for Germany with the intention of following up his Hegel studies at the University of Berlin. We remember Belinsky's shocked reaction to the news of Stankevitch's death, his plague of doubt as to immortality of the individual, the way his sensitive soul was torn. Bakunin had just arrived in Berlin when the news reached him.

Stankevitch, that blessed, exalted individual, has departed from us. I do not know how, but his death does not leave me stifled, on the contrary, in death there is something which lifts up and inspires faith and strength. His immortal soul hovers over us, he has bequeathed to us a divine appointment and an infinitely deep riddle of his life as a single purpose, to which we all must strive, and an accomplishment which will become the inexhaustable blessed fount of love and pleasure. He is nearer to us now than before, he is not apart from us. A death such as his is the mastering of death, a supreme revelation of the immortality and infinite powers of living and truly eternal soul.²¹

While Belinsky proceeded to go to pieces, Bakunin calmly and with confident assurance expressed his conviction that Stankevitch would live forever in some kind of "Hegelian Heaven".

During the first year of residence in Germany, Bakunin held fast to the orthodox idealism of Hegel, at least in its essentials. At the University of Berlin, Bakunin heard lectures by Werder, Gabler, Vatke, Hotho

and others, and carried on his further study of Hegel.²² Within these two years Bakunin underwent a change—from mystic Hegelianism to what is called the "Philosophy of Action". By the end of 1842, Bakunin considered himself an adherent of the Left-Hegelians.

Bakunin's ample correspondence with his sisters and his friends is filled, as Chizhevsky says, "with religious-moralistic meditations, in a conspicuous Hegelian terminology, the repetitious mystical thoughts lending it a rather strange almost pathological coloring."²³ The theme of personal immortality plays a large part in these reflections. Typical, is the letter to his sisters (3/1/1842).

But now, my dear, I believe unconditionally in (immortality). I can't say that I have resolved all the contradictions connected with the question . . . I believe that everyone must go through a period of doubt as to immortality, so that he might finally be cleansed of all individual egoism, so that doubt might be clarified in this purifying flame. Immortality should certainly not be the claim of the ego or of diseased individuality, but a holy, eternally contemporaneous consciousness in oneself of the all-embracing personal spirit. Individuality must perish, disappear in order to become a personality; not personality in general, but this indivisible personality. Self-negation is the general and highest law of all spiritual life. In contradistinction to material life which has only that which it saves for itself, the spirit has only that which it gives away. And death, this complete destruction of the individual, is the highest fulfilment of this secret, and thus the highest accomplishment of the personality. For this reason death, in its positive meaning, is present in the most exalted and most blessed moments of life. The positive, merciful meaning of death should be carried through our lives in order to make it real life. Man must ceaselessly die, to live forever. And only for a graceless life is death a bad negation—and life a bad continuation. For a man penetrated by grace, death is the life of life, a source of its magnificent plentitude, its eternity in that life is conscious of itself. To wish for death is sinful, because that death is not the true death which is present in life, but a striving to a bad end of a bad life. 'Thy will be done' is the only prayer, for only in this will are life and death gathered together.²⁴

By this time, Bakunin had made the acquaintance of Arnold Ruge, and had met other students who belonged to the Left-Hegelian camp. Bakunin did not sympathize with these innovators at first, but picked his way gradually from his mystic religious position to a philosophy of "action". But this led him relentlessly into alliance with those who would use Hegel to correct Hegel. This philosophy of action first came to light at the end of 1841, but with a distinctly religious flavor. He appealed to man that action be the motto of life rather than static contentment. Man must produce, struggle, and be actively engaged in the realization of truth. This led him to bring in the Contradiction as the motivator of action which in turn was the creative well-spring of life.

When we say that life is beautiful and divine, we also say it is full of contradictions. Contradiction is life, the charm of life and

whoever can't surmount these contradictions can't surmount life; but every man should and can; therein lies man's humanity. This belief is cons away from the passive reception of truth . . . Only he exists who makes himself into himself, such is human worth and eternity, this is the source of all love and holiness.²⁵

Throughout 1842, Bakunin persisted in his development of the philosophy of action.

Action is living and the real deed is only possible in actual contradictions, and in the face of real obstruction. We don't want to surrender any of our old idealism, but we want to enlarge and proclaim that idealism by means of the wonder of the deed.²⁶

Life is action; by the deed, man lives. Contradictions are his food and nourishment, for they pose the obstructions which inspire the deeds that enrich life and lead to eternal harmony. The old idealism of orthodox Hegelianism was clasped tightly, but Bakunin was drifting relentlessly in a leftward direction. With the rise of importance of the actual deed, and human action, Bakunin's thoughts turned more away from speculative abstract philosophizing to the contradictions which were not merely "empty words, but real, bloody contradictions". This, we might call the "actualization" of Bakunin's speculation. With the completion of this process of actualization, marked by the pseudonymous article by "Jules Elysard" for the "Deutsche Jahrbucher" entitled "Reaction in Germany", Bakunin closed the books of philosophy.²⁷

Bakunin presented a basic philosophic program for a resurgent wave of democratic feeling. In this article we find that most quoted of Bakunin's statements: "The lust to destroy, is a creative passion." How did he arrive at this statement? And where did he turn once he had so unequivocally committed himself?

In harmony with his partially developed Philosophy of action, which in most respects paralleled the development of Left Hegelianism as a whole, Bakunin moved directly into everyday politics. Prussia was headed by a new king, Friedrich IV, who by constantly stirring the pot of reaction, did more to accelerate the Left-Hegelian-democratic-revolutionary movement than anyone else. Impatiently, the "young Hegelians" demanded action. Bakunin presented their case.

The realization of liberty stands on the order of the day. Politically, the parties are divided into three parts: the reactionaries (positive), the compromisers, and the democrats (negative). Bakunin explains that the reactionary party is necessary, for without it the democratic party would not exist as the negative element conditioned by the reaction. The democratic party does not yet exist in its own affirmative realm. Only the future will reveal victorious democracy, no more a mere negation. "There will be a qualitative transformation, a new living, life-giving revelation, a new heaven and a new earth, a young and mighty world in which all our present dissonances will be resolved into a harmonious whole."²⁸ But now the party is a part negating a positive part. It must bend every effort in the direction of the destruction of the positive. Up to this time the positive had enjoyed a certain "primat" within Hegelian thought; to it was

reserved the role of ultimate victor, absolute virtue, the paragon of goodness. Now that Hegelian philosophy had reached its high water mark in theoretical "onesidedness", and "action" was the battle cry, the negative assumed the favored "primat" position.

According to Bakunin, both the positive and negative parties were one-sided. Such parties cannot use Truth as a weapon, for "truth is the opposite of all one-sidedness."²⁹ In expression, this one-sidedness must be partisan and fanatic, and filled with hate. It is a curse and a contradiction that all good feelings which are born in every man must be expressed in terms of hate.

In the battle with the positive, many "evil passions" will be aroused.

As long as we belong to a party we are often unjust and partisan, but we are not only the mere opponent of the positive party, but the possessors of a principle—negation. We must not only act politically, but also in our politics we must act religiously, religious in the sense of freedom, whose only true expression is justice and love. Yes, to us alone, we, who have been called the enemies of the Christian religion, to us alone we reserved the duty to practice that highest injunction of Christ, love even in the hottest struggle.³⁰

Bakunin's main enemy however was not the positive party, but a group he called the compromisers. They would reconcile positive and negative to produce a synthesis. This would only create an external harmony in theory, but would seriously overlook the central theoretical message of Hegel which provided the guiding principle for practical action, namely the "Gegensatz". "The Gegensatz itself, as the envelopment of both one-sided members, is total, absolute and true . . . We must grasp the Gegensatz in its totality, in order to have the truth."³¹ Here Bakunin arrived at the notion of the "primat" of the negative. "The positive and negative are not equally justified, but an over balance on the side of the negative because of the Gegensatz."³²

"The positive is negated by the negative, and the negative is negated by the positive. What is there in common? Negation."³³ The negative party is justified in a reckless negation because this would be the practical and visible realization of the spirit of the Gegensatz. This spirit would be revealed in a really democratic and universal-human Church of freedom.

Bakunin proceeded to condemn the state, and was moved to deplore the fact that both Protestantism and Catholicism had deteriorated beyond recognition. In the reactionary state and in the decayed "positive" religions, Bakunin saw his enemy, the positive. "As a matter of fact, gentlemen, you must admit that our time is a depressing time, and that we are all the much more depressed children of the times."³⁴ The spirit of revolution was showing itself. "Even in Russia, so little known to us, a country to whom perhaps belongs a great future, the dark storm clouds are gathering. Oh, the air is oppressive, it is pregnant with storms."³⁵ In a final clarion appeal, Bakunin exhorted his readers: "Let us ally ourselves with the eternal spirit, which only destroys and demolishes because it is the unfathomable and eternally creative source of all life . . . The passion for destruction is also a creative passion!"³⁶

Here is the new practical world postulated by the theoretical philosophy of Hegel. Here one finds no more ready-made theories but only "the primitive action of the practical autonomous spirit." The book of philosophy slammed shut, as Bakunin waved adieu to Hegelian speculative idealism and thus allied himself with other leading lights of the day: Bruno Bauer, Stirner, and Feuerbach. The way was open to political action, to revolution. He set out armed with a weapon of his own design, the eternal spirit of the *Gegensatz*.

To study Bakunin without knowing the personality of the man, would be to miss the point of his whole life. His real nature first came to light in his relations with his family. He exercised a stern tyranny over his worshipful sisters, he bombarded them with advice, spoke to them of love and freedom while he at the same time caused them to bow and sway at his slightest command. Towards his father, he acted rebelliously; and his mother he disliked intensely. Natalie and Alexandra Beyer were also counted as his loyal subjects. Normal love between man and woman he was incapable of, so his outlet seemed to have been the hectic and frustrating practice of "higher, philosophic love". Premukhino was always the scene of domestic strife whenever Michael meddled with domestic affairs. "Michael says—" was always the preface to any opinion offered by the Bakunin girls. Bakunin was a self-styled leader, and was happy only as long as he was the teacher and had many docile disciples lying devotedly at his feet. Coupled with this influence over others by reason of some in-born power of persuasion, there is also the fact that Bakunin was ever the aristocrat. Money was beneath him. He would refuse to write for money, so he never wrote more than a modest volume for publication in his whole life. He borrowed money indiscriminately, classifying his debts as ones that involved either honor or prison. The "prison" debts were the bulk of debts he paid. As an aristocrat, he had a station in life. His shameless snubbing of Belinsky, the son of a mere professional man, left wounds in Belinsky's heart that never completely healed. In recent years much ado was made of Bakunin's "relinquishment" of his noble status as a "grandstand" play to build up Bakunin's "proletarian" character. His title was taken away in 1844 when he was sentenced in absentia to Siberia. Title or no, he acted as if he had one! Bakunin was the type who could make new friends more easily than he could keep old ones. He had a genius for befriending people, but soon fell short of close friendship because of his own remarkable lack of diplomacy, because of an irrepressible desire to help, which often revealed itself as meddling, and finally because he was happy only as long as he was the teacher and the leader. How different Stankevitch. Bakunin was mercilessly caricatured in Turgenev's "Rudin", but in reading this venomous little volume more pity than despite is aroused.

The accounts of Bakunin's adventures in Western Europe, his capture and subsequent exile are of little value within the framework of this exposition of his religious and anti-religious views. Of real worth would be a survey of Bakunin's revolt against authority, his anarchism.

With the publication of "Reaction in Germany", Bakunin had conclusively asserted his allegiance to the Left-Hegelian movement. It is sur-

prising that very little is found in his correspondence that would directly indicate an interest in Strauss, Feuerbach, or Bruno Bauer. The "Jules Elysard" article, nevertheless, is rich with the clichés of the left, and echoes many of the more prominent assertions of Bakunin's unmentioned colleagues.³⁷ The Leftish, revolutionary-radical pronouncement stirred a strong sense of caution in Bakunin, and led him to flee to Switzerland.

The philosopher had turned revolutionist. The most important contact Bakunin made in this period was with Wilhelm Weitling. A letter to Ruge (19/1/43) contains a quotation from Weitling's book "Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom": "The perfect society has no government, but only an administration, no laws, but only obligations, no punishments, but means of correction."³⁸ Revolution was no longer an idea to be toyed with in a fashionable salon. Weitling and Bakunin met one another in May of 1843 at Zuerich. Here was a "fire-eater", a practical man of action, who bore his grudge, and would shoot to kill. Bakunin's friendship with Weitling was not a long one but the effects were lasting. Revolutionary overthrow of the political and social order became the basic motif for the rest of Bakunin's active life.

The next important milestone on the way to revolutionary anarchism was Bakunin's meeting with Proudhon in 1844. Proudhon had already made his mark in 1840 with the publication of a pamphlet entitled "What is Property?". If nothing else, he did succeed in tearing away from the trite and monotonous procession of French "utopias" by announcing that "property is theft!". Property was denied, and political authority was negated. God also fell before Proudhon's scythe which cut a wide swath of destruction. In regard to God, he was not atheist, but as he himself emphasized, and antitheist, for he believed in God as the personification of evil. In a flash of brilliant reasoning he maintained that if there were no God at all, then there would be no property owners (which was of course a good thing)!

Contact with Proudhon undoubtedly brought such ideas out into the open. Bakunin always expressed his obligation to Proudhon in later days when Bakunin himself was elaborating his own anarchical attack on God, Government, and Property.

Another acquaintance was Karl Marx. From the very first, Bakunin could not stand Marx. He admired him it is true, but the clash of two distinct personalities with two distinct backgrounds made it next to impossible that the two should have been close friends. "At that time, (wrote Bakunin later) I understand nothing of political economy, and my socialism was purely instinctive. Marx, though he was younger than I, was already an atheist, an instructed materialist, and a conscious socialist."³⁹ Marx's cold and calculating, scientific and rational revolutionary doctrine proved to be too much for Bakunin, who valued the powers of instinct and emotion so highly. From this mutual distrust grew the great "Controversy" between Bakunin and Marx some years later.

These new acquaintances all left their mark on Bakunin's political, social and religious development. Politically, Bakunin's life began with the publication of "Reaction in Germany", in 1842. Until he was arrested in

1849, Bakunin had consistently turned more and more towards the revolutionary Weitling-Proudhon position. It was not until after a decade in exile that Bakunin let the world know what he thought.

One would ordinarily assume that Bakunin had automatically joined the ranks of the atheists as soon as he made his vow to destroy and create through revolutionary action. But no. Back in the idyllic summer of 1836, Bakunin had sought God through the roseate philosophy of Fichte. Traditional religion was out of the question. Then came Hegel, who satisfactorily answered the pressing question about coarse reality of the world. He had furnished the System which included everything and was all in all. Theory, speculation, and romantic wonderings suddenly gave way to the Act, the practical, the basic realities of the world. Each case, each step of the way, constituted a faith in itself, but the common object of the search was God. God had been sought in the "inner" being, in Reality, and now in revolution. The common denominator of this series of faiths, and this series of "Gods", was an almost universal conscious or unconscious conviction that man or mankind was basically good. The key to the Kingdom of Heaven was to be found in the means by which this basic good could be brought to triumph over evil through the efforts of man himself. This, then, was idealist religion but in various forms, expressing itself either by an act of contemplative thought while swinging idly in a hammock under a summer sky, or by an act of ruthless, bloody and merciless destruction. Whether a day-dreamer or an anarchist, like Bakunin, one must say in each case that atheism against God was not involved.

Bakunin's concept of Christianity and God was shaped much in the same way that Belinsky's was. His denial of Hegel's "Speculative-positive-idealist God" did not occasion violent recriminations against that God, but expressed itself in Bakunin's search for God in revolution. He built his eschatology around an "affirmative democracy" reached by means of constant negation and destruction. While Belinsky proceeded from a deceptive faith in Hegelian Christianity to a deceptive atheism, Bakunin exchanged the speculative idealistic God concept for faith in action which was described as a search for God in revolution. While Belinsky gradually cast aside his idealism shred by shred, Bakunin remained an idealist by nature until his death, even at the height of his career as an anarchist. It must be understood at this point that Bakunin was atheistic only in relation to Hegelian Christianity. He was not atheistic towards Christ, for Christ, a paradox to the believer and the honest atheist, was unknown to Bakunin as the man who is also God. As was stated in the preceding chapter, this unique and absurd aspect of Christianity had no place in a system based on speculation, and was therefore hidden to the potential believer. On the grounds of rational ethics Bakunin felt that Hegel had somehow distorted religion. By taking the same tools which Hegel had used, Bakunin attempted to fashion what he frankly termed a "new Church and a new religion". The God, Who was sought in revolution, could not but be another idealistic deity; a pagan idealist God concept doomed to the same fate as the orthodox Hegelian God concept for the reason of its lack of foundation in the reality of God's revelation in Christ.

As the revolutionary pressures were mounting throughout Europe prior to the Paris Revolution in 1848, Bakunin was busily laying his plans for action. Bakunin was not the type who would have been satisfied to sit peaceably behind the lines composing ideological manifestoes. His temperament was geared to buccaneering excitement, heaving rocks, and potting at troops from behind the barricades. He was a rabble-rouser to perfection, but his zeal was so great that his associates soon began to detect that unwelcome depotic trait in his character. Throughout all of 1848 and most of 1849, Bakunin hectically raced from Paris to Frankfurt, Breslau, Leipzig, Prague and Dresden desperately trying to fan the sparks of revolution as they occurred. During this period he wrote his famous "Appeal to the Slavs". The message was briefly this: with the working class the hopes of the revolution lay; Austria must be broken up to make way for the founding of free and federated Slav republics; the peasantry of all the Slavic countries, particularly Russia, would be the deciding factor in the success of the revolution in the long run. This document is one of the first revolutionary Pan-Slavic programs. This too indicates a Slavophile line of thought in Bakunin's predominantly Zapadnik position with regard to Russia. A similar tendency will be noted in Herzen's thought during his prolonged melancholia which followed the defeat of the Paris revolt in 1848.

After Bakunin's capture, in May of 1849 at Chemnitz, he was shuttled from one prison to another in Central Europe in order that each of the many offended governments could satisfy its own damaged honor by convicting the gadfly of revolution. Ultimately Bakunin was transferred in chains to the Peter-Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, in 1851. From that time until 1854 he was locked in his cell. He was then sent to Schlüsselberg Prison where he stayed until he was exiled to Siberia in 1857. While he was in exile, he married Antonia Kwiatkowski. In 1861, an opportunity presented itself and Bakunin fled to Japan. From there he sailed to San Francisco, then to New York, where he met some of his old friends of a dozen years back, and finally he arrived at Alexander Herzen's doorstep in London. He had lost his teeth, he was without funds as always, and was eager to begin stirring the revolutionary pots of Europe once more.

Until the opening of secret archives after the Soviet Revolution, this period of Bakunin's "retirement" from society had been a mysterious blank, broken only by a few letters from him that were found at Premukhino. The most sensational find was Bakunin's confession to Nicholas I, and his confession to Alexander II. The tone of these confessions is throughout, one of absolute and abject repentance. He spoke of his many crimes ranging from Hegelian idealism to his own revolutionary activity. Interesting are the explanations and apologies that have accompanied the publication of the confessions. The docile, servile and humbled air of the confession is nearly cast aside by the reminder that when addressing the Emperor the most rigid forms of literary etiquette had to be observed. The existence of the confession itself was explained in revolutionary terms,

Bakunin simply wanted out of prison. Confinement was becoming unbearable. According to revolutionary ethics, any means of deception, any

lie, or any treachery was permitted if the ends of the revolution were served. Therefore, the confession. Isn't it strange that Bakunin never breathed a word about his confession to any of his friends after his escape from Siberia? Perhaps he was ashamed to admit the fact that he had bent his knee to the emperor. Had the confession been a simple tactic designed to serve only the ends of the revolution, and he had actually managed to free himself, then one would assume that Bakunin would have no twinges of conscience. He would have told his friends of it as if it were all in the day's work of a revolutionary! Be that as it may, Bakunin nevertheless returned to Europe much the same revolutionary as before.

Space does not allow us to follow Bakunin as he darted hither and yon over the face of Europe once more, nor may we dwell at length on Bakunin's relationship to Marx. What concerns us mainly is the continuation of Bakunin's search for God in revolution. Let us pick up the thread once more.

Bakunin's attempt to work in conjunction with Herzen and Ogaryov in the publication of the "Kolokol", an organ of propaganda issued from Herzen's private press in London, proved unsuccessful. Bakunin set out for high adventure in the Polish disturbances of 1863, which ended in an absolute fiasco. In January of 1864, he arrived in Italy accompanied by his Polish wife. For a little over a year the Bakunin's stayed in Florence. It was here that the religious problem began to take hold of him once more, here in the midst of a tumultuous Italy striving for independence, Italy of Garibaldi and Mazzini.

So far, we have seen that Bakunin was by no means atheistically minded prior to his arrest in 1849. To be sure, he had voiced his hostility towards the Orthodox Church and was not attached to any particular religious confession, but this in itself was only a protest against the Church as such, a type of anti-clericalism. Religion itself was not a pressing question. He often expressed his belief in God, and assured his friends that religion was something that everyone must necessarily have. We already know that Bakunin sought God in revolution. "God is freedom."⁴⁰ Later he wrote: "I seek God in people, in their freedom, but now I seek God in revolution, I will be blessed if I may die for the freedom of the Poles and the Russians."⁴¹ From Peter-Paul Fortress, Bakunin wrote his family: "Music has always been my favorite form of artistic expression; it always arouses a religious feeling in me."⁴² Ivan Turgenev wrote to Herzen in 1869 on the occasion of Bakunin's sudden turn towards anti-religiosity: "He seems to have altered his opinions: the last time I saw him in London (1862) he still believed in a personal God. In a chat with me, carried on in the old romantic vein, he deplored your unbelief."⁴³ Garibaldi seems to have pleased Bakunin at the time when he first moved to Italy in that the Italian leader believed in God and the historical mission of man. All of this brings us to the crucial point.

Back in 1845, Bakunin had joined the Free Mason lodge in Paris, the Grand Orient. During the twenty year interval, his interest had flagged, but once settled in Florence he was approached by the leader of the local masonic lodge. The invitation to re-join was accepted, but it was to lead

him into *Italian* Masonry, probably the most persecuted branch of Masonry at that time. Because of the ever-present pressure from the Catholic Church, the Italian Masons were radically anti-clerical and generally atheistic. Bakunin's association with this element of Italian life shattered his already precarious religious convictions, and led him not only to take a cynical view of Masonry but also to drop all pretensions of searching for God. At first, Bakunin had firmly believed that Masonry would provide a spiritual support for revolution, but within a short span of time, this hope had vanished. From this period of dawning atheism, the famous Bakuninist formula was expressed: "God exists, therefore man is a slave. Man is free, therefore there is no God. Escape this dilemma who can!"⁴⁴ The "Catechism of a Free Mason" drove his point home. A personal God is incompatible with reason, and human liberty. The flag was raised on the side of human freedom. God, providing he existed, must be by the nature of things an evil tyrant. From this point onwards to the end of Bakunin's life, the program was not changed. Rather than comb through all of Bakunin's flaming oratory, which is repetitious, let us concentrate on Bakunin's main work which presents in logical style his case against the Biblical God or any other God.

To prepare ourselves for the over-rich diet that "God and the State" affords us, here is an excerpt from a speech given in 1868 in Bern before the League for Peace and Freedom: A previous speaker had remarked that Christianity provided the only basis for morals. Bakunin rushed to attack:

Let me say that not only is Christianity but every other religion incompatible with human morality. In the name of morality we battle against religion, because the victory of morality and justice is impossible as long as the earth is terrorized by religious illusions. Who ever wants God, also wants the enslavement of humanity. Either God and the humiliation of mankind, or freedom of mankind and humiliation of the divine illusion, that is the dilemma; there is no compromise. Choose! In order to eradicate religion, which makes us coarse and dejected slaves, intellectual chatter is not enough, only the social revolution is the answer!⁴⁵

Bakunin's activity in the League revolved about his newly developed social philosophy. He identified himself with the extreme left, called for social revolution on an international scale, and condemned both the state and religion in any or all forms. The newest change in his previous anarchical point of view was the accent upon internationalism, and federation, and of course the crystalization of his anti-theological convictions. Atheism was a prerequisite both in Marxism and for Bakunin's anarchic socialism. Godlessness also provided the basis for the hair-raising "Catechism of a Revolutionary" which was prepared by the infamous Netchaev with the help of the gullible Bakunin. In 1871, the question of religion came to a head. The occasion was Mazzini's condemnation of the International as materialistic and atheistic. Bakunin situated the atheists on the side of revolutionary progressivism, on the side of human freedom opposed to the degradation of mankind under the double yoke of spiritual and temporal power.

Now let us turn to Bakunin's own statement of his case for atheism as presented in "God and the State".

The starting point is Genesis. The Great Jehovah, out of boredom, decided to create man and to give him the world as his play ground. But then the myth of original sin! "Along came the devil, the eternal rebel, the first free thinker, and liberator" who encouraged man to violate Jehovah's injunction. For centuries, God displayed his wrath, but suddenly realized that He was also a God of love. In order to repay to man the damages incurred by His anger He sent his own Son to earth in order to be killed by man. Some will be saved, but the great majority of us will forever bake in hell.

God admitted to the devil and recognized the fact that satan had not deceived Adam and Eve when he promised knowledge and freedom as reward for disobedience, for God said to himself afterwards, 'See there, man has become like one of Us, he knows good from evil.'⁴⁶ Man therefore began his history and human development "by an act of disobedience and knowledge, revolution and thought."⁴⁷ Bakunin closes his own book of Genesis by outlining three basic principles of man's development in history: 1. The animal, 2. Thought (science), and 3. Rebellion (freedom).

This discourse is followed up by a defense of the materialist point of view, and the rejection of idealism as rank absurdity, and contrary to the normal path of development "from the bottom to the top".

"Nothing is more natural than that the belief in God is strong among the less enlightened masses of people. The people are kept in a state of ignorance by means of systematic government measures, so that the rulers might remain firmly anchored in power." It is interesting to note that in Russia at that time Pobedonostzev was bending every effort to strengthen the Church and in turn the state by condemning the West, and maintaining ignorance among the people. To the many people who upheld the beliefs of a Pobedonostzev, Bakunin gave the Voltairian motto: "If there were no God, one would have to be invented. For you understand, the people need a religion. Religion is the safety valve."⁴⁸ Attacking further, Bakunin deplored their reliance on tradition and general acceptance as a basis for their conclusions. These worthless and invalid reasons for the pursuit of freedom should be cast aside and replaced by material science and logic.

Bakunin then turned to a discussion of the existence of God from the standpoint of moral and social necessity, and to the theoretical origin of the belief in God.

All religions are but the figments of man's own imagination. Heaven is nothing but a reflection in which man, exalting ignorance and faith, sees his own image enlarged and perverted and therefore deified. . . . Heaven is enriched by the generosity of the believers and by that the earth is impoverished. . . . Christianity is the religion par excellence, because it expresses the very nature of all religion, namely, poverty, slavery and the rejection of the world in favor of God. If God is all, the real world and man are nothing. Because God is truth, and good, then man is the opposite. If God is the master,

then man is the slave. The only way is through revelation, but to say this is also to admit the necessity of having infallible propagandists of God on earth. Therefore, as slaves to God, man is also slave to the Church and to the State as long as the state is consecrated by the Church! . . . If God exists, then man is a slave; man can and should be free: Therefore God does not exist!⁴⁹

Bakunin's references to the impoverishment of the world, man's perverted and deified image, and so on all sound like echoes from Feuerbach. "All religions kill human pride and worthiness, while the humble and cowardly are protected . . . All religions are austere. Man is always sacrificed and the clergyman is his executioner."⁵⁰ Bakunin again emphasized the necessity of a choice. Man can't say "God and human freedom in one breath . . . If perchance God exists, there is only one way in which He might serve the cause of human freedom: by ceasing to exist. If God really exists, one must dispose of Him."⁵¹

Once God had been disposed of, Bakunin turned towards the constructive part of his thesis: Natural Law. He admitted that man could not be entirely free within the bounds of Natural Law, but at least to be a subject of this law would not mean degradation. Slavery presupposes a master, Bakunin went on to explain, a master set apart from his slave. But there is no master like that in Natural Law, for that law is inherent in all men. It would be impossible to rebel against this law, and man must seek his freedom within it.⁵²

Freedom consists in obeying the natural laws because man recognizes them himself and not because they were forced upon him by a foreign will. . . . We recognize the absolute authority of science, because science has no other purpose apart from the spiritual restitution of the natural laws inherent in the natural, intellectual, and moral life of the physical and social world. These worlds form one natural world. Apart from this authority, legitimate because it is rational and compatible with human freedom, all other authorities are despotic.⁵³

The Pattern is becoming clearer. Is this great Science to be the object of Bakunin's faith? Hark unto this:

In our church we have an invisible Christ, Science, but we do not tolerate popes, bishops, infallible cardinals nor pastors. Our Christ is different from the Protestant or Christian Christ in that ours is impersonal and theirs is personal; the Christian Christ who came to perfection in the past represents Himself as the creature of perfection, while the completion and perfection of our Christ, Science, lies ever in the future, which is as much as to say that the full realization of Science will never be reached. Therefore, if we recognize only the absolute authority of science (but not the authority of the representatives of science) we will not sacrifice our freedom.⁵⁴

To draw parallels between Bakunin's idea of the Christian Christ and his own Scientific "Christ", let me employ this simple table:

Christian Christ

Personal
Past Perfection
+ Obligation to the past

No Freedom

Scientific Christ

Impersonal
Future perfection or none
+ No obligation

Greatest freedom

Bakunin's new faith was strangely complete even to the point of fashioning a paradox out of the "Scientific Christ". Science, it seemed, could be the benefactor of men as well as man's tormentor! "On one side, science is indispensable to the rational organization of society, and on the other, because of its indifference to real and living things, it should not be allowed to interfere with the real and practical organization of society. . . . Science is called on to represent the collective consciousness of society and must be the property of all."⁵⁵ Poignantly Bakunin observed:

A government of men of science, whether the disciples of Comte or even the students of the doctrinaire school of German Communism can only be a futile, ridiculous, inhuman, cruel, oppressive, exploiting and absolutist one. What has been said of the metaphysicians and theologians also goes for these men of science: they have neither the feeling nor the heart for the personal, living creature.⁵⁶

The key to the type of atheism that Bakunin preached can be found in the works of Pobedonostsev, the High-Procurator of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church. There was no direct personal relationship between the Procurator and Bakunin other than that they lived and pursued their objectives at nearly the same time. Pobedonostsev (1827-1907) was originally trained as a jurist and entered into government service at an early age. During the sixties he became interested in religious affairs and within a few years had succeeded in publishing his own idea of Christianity as the guiding principle of autocracy. In a comparatively short time his theocratic philosophy of absolute power gained attention in higher circles. This philosophy served as a blueprint for the Church-State relationship during Pobedonostsev's long career as High Procurator. We are already acquainted with the type of distortion Christianity went through in Hegel's hands. Now we shall see what happened to Christianity in the hands of the Procurator. At the root of Pobedonostsev's theocratic doctrine was the all pervading necessity for a close union of the Church and the State. He had no respect for parliamentarian or republican governmental forms, maintaining all the while that the Russian system of patriarchal absolute monarchy was the only "Christian" type of government. As the moving spirit of such absolutism he always designated "faith". But this faith was a dedication of the people to the State, in a religious sense. Religious faith and faith in the power of the state became one. Atheism, he called treason, for it undermined the "Volks glauben" of the masses. He claimed that it would be impossible for a state to exist if it were to be composed of free-thinkers and atheists, unless of course atheism were made a state religion! The point of departure for Pobedonostsev's argumentation was the assumption that power is good, that "power is something great, dreadful, because it is something holy. . . . Power does not exist for its own sake,

but for God's sake, it is a service to which one dedicates himself."⁵⁷ The representative for such "holy power" was of course the Tsar. Temporal rule was re-made to assume a spiritual cast. In such expert and powerful hands, Christianity underwent some violent changes. Humility was for the humble, power for the powerful. If Christianity's strength could so easily be measured by the number of secret state police on duty, is it any wonder that such fire-eaters as Michael Bakunin graced the revolutionary scene? The issue between these two factions was the question of power. After the liberation of the serfs in 1861, the Russian government swung over into the reactionary camp. The spokesmen of reaction were quick to shape a policy which revolved about the deification of power, the justification of power. Christianity was twisted to fit the case for the unrestricted use of state power, and on the basis of this grotesque interpretation of Christianity, Bakunin sought to destroy Christianity first and then let earthly tyranny fall of itself. Bakunin operated on exactly the same lines that Pobedonostsev laid down, but in a diametrically opposite direction. When the Procurator warned that a denial of God would ruin the state, Bakunin promptly denied God. If God existed, he must be destroyed! It seems that Pobedonostsev's ideas on the possibility of an atheistic state religion troubled Bakunin. He sensed an atheist religious totalitarianism in Marxism and on the basis of that he turned away from Marx. The thought again cropped up in his attempt to outline a scientific "faith" which would be amenable to anarchism. It is almost certain that Bakunin recognized the paradox which always arises as soon as atheism appears: that atheism itself is a religious phenomenon. Herzen chided Bakunin by asking if it were not just as despotic to demand that one must not have faith as to demand that one have faith. Bakunin's atheism as expressed in "God and the State" was primarily an atheism against a power cult which sought its own justification in Christianity. It is significant that in the midst of Bakunin's destruction of the ideological roots of state power, strong elements of the ethical religious came to light. He called for a "new Church and a new religion" based on the impersonal concept of a scientific Christ. Here Bakunin was forced to a halt. Science could be the guarantor of ethical good, but at the same time it could be most despotic. The tragedy of Bakunin's position was that he never realized that the Christianity he sought to destroy was but the fabrication of a "Grand Inquisitor", a spurious "correction" of the Truth that is Christ. Faith in Christ was misrepresented, and the atheism towards that distorted concept was also misdirected. The basic guilt for such an atheism as Bakunin's lay not in the atheism but in the aberration of Christianity against which Bakunin revolted. Just as Hegel subtly re-arranged Christianity in order to fit it into his speculative-religious philosophy, so did Pobedonostsev alter Christianity in order that it should become the main support of the cult of despotic state power. Christianity was in each case compromised seriously. It was not the System, not magnified power which bore the brunt of the blame, but Christianity and religion. This brings up another aspect of the danger which confronts Christianity always. Atheism has for ages been considered the primary threat to Christianity, it is against the atheists

that the apologists have directed their arguments, it is the atheist who must bear the hypocritical recriminations of so-called believers. Atheism has come to mean a blanket denial of all religion, and from that, the mistaken idea has arisen that all atheists are alike.

Genuine atheism, like genuine faith is a very rare thing. Here we return to the central determinant of faith: the paradox which man notices when he considers that God could and would be man, Christ. No amount of rational deliberation will carry one to that faith which will move mountains. One must believe or be offended. Neither belief nor offense are static, but must be determined by the subject's decision throughout each moment of his life on earth. Faith and atheism are both decisions on man's part, for they are the alternatives which are posed to him. If one should say "no" to God, no church, no priest, friend or pastor can attempt to influence his decisions. If the confrontation has occurred and continues to occur, it is up to the individual to make his own decision.

But Bakunin's atheism was not of this sort. Here was something different. His denial of God was a denial of a perverted Christianity. Atheism of this sort is in a sense justified. It was a symptom of man's outraged sense of justice. But two negatives in religious affairs do not make a positive. The Religion of Power Christianity was in itself a negative compromise of Christianity, and the reaction against it took the form of an atheism against Power-Christianity. But in expounding his case against Christianity as he conceived of it Bakunin led others to agree with him and thus implanted in the minds of his followers a false view of Christian Truth. In ever widening circles, this type of unfounded atheism spread. Atheism in this case was a symptom of Christianity's betrayal; it was not the betrayal itself. It is not against such atheists that Christian thinkers must expend their energies but against the one's who "correct" Christ's work in the first place. Modern mass atheism owes endless gratitude to the Hegels and Pobedonostsevs of the last century, and to such misdirected saints as Bakunin who innocently expressed their candid and righteous indignation against the lukewarm compromisers who appeared to be the advocates of the Christian message.

Bakunin has gone down in history as an anarchist and an atheist, but his atheism was only silver plated, not sterling. Bakunin played the role of the second party to the double-deception from which modern mass atheism has arisen. Though he has been disowned by his country because of his anarchistic "anti-atheist religious" views, he is much in their debt for having created a deceptive atheism against a compromised Christianity which is the founding stone of the power cult of atheist state religion.

CHAPTER V

ALEXANDER IVANOVITCH HERZEN

(1812-1870)

Systematic study of Alexander Herzen has always been beset with difficulties. As a philosopher, he was highly unorthodox in that his views on life were so easily swayed by his own personal activities. In other words, philosophy of life was determined by life itself, and was not the usual governing and integrating idea which shapes one's life. The biography of Herzen acts as a sensitive barometer which forecasts to a remarkable degree of accuracy the coming trends in Herzen's world outlook. Ultimately, this means that philosophy in Herzen's case was the idea determined by and relative to Herzen the man, not Herzen determined by and relative to a philosophical idea. Rather than seeking out the order of things by first seeking for a given idea, a system, or philosophical plan which of itself proposes to give order to life, Herzen accepted himself as the "given quantity", and then proceeded to search for an idea that would fit this given quantity. One might add here Karl Barth's convictions regarding the "Order of God and the disorder of man", for it indicates and suggests to us that Herzen, working out from a given human standpoint was inevitably doomed to fall into a chaotic, and disorderly philosophical abyss, with no hope of rescue from paradox.

It is precisely this reversed procedure in Herzen's case that differentiates him from his contemporaries, Belinsky and Bakunin. In the search for the freedom of man, which was after all the quest engaged in by the majority of nineteenth century European thinkers, many plans, panaceas, systems, and schemes were proposed. All these were grounded on the highly fallible reason of man, and were therefore in the last analysis referred back to the individual chaotic, (and we might agree to this term) the sinful nature of man. However this may be, and may have been, the sheer majesty of an ideological system was enough to create the illusion that this was something more than man and consequently a "divine" object of adoration, a giver of order and an object of faith. It is paradoxical indeed that man, searching for freedom, is duped by a man-made illusion which pretends to be divine, and then casting himself willingly into a new order of life finds himself laboring under the worst possible slavery, with no hope of rest or liberation. Men like Belinsky and Bakunin are comparatively easy to figure out because they identified

themselves (subordinated themselves) with a system or idea and had *faith* in it. In doing so they achieved some measure of external order in relation to the central disorder of a carefully logical system. Order was in relation to the system, and from the system or the idea or faith we were able to trace with accuracy the life determined by that idea. Not so with Herzen. His life was determined by his life. One might even give him credit for abstaining from the elaborate and illusory order of a fundamentally disorderly system. But in doing so, he had done his biographers and many a student a mean trick.

It is absolutely essential that we recognize at the very outset that the nature of Herzen's search was highly original in its fundamental simplicity and straightforwardness, that here was an instance where one man attempted to create order out of disorder through his own efforts, without the "help" of a logical system which in the end was but the same disorder, that here we find the ingredients of a first class tragedy (no greater than the tragedy caused by faith in a man-made system) which led Herzen eventually to the depths of mental chaos because of his incapability of coping with the paradox of faith and the dualism of life. One cannot apply the idea to the man if one is to understand Herzen's philosophy correctly, but one must observe a determined man's reaction to various ideas. Here is not a case where a man is governed by one central idea, but where he is critical master of the ideas he selects and is master of them as far as he is able. Rather than work from the idea outwards (in Belinsky's and Bakunin's philosophies) to gain an insight into the subject himself, we are obliged to begin with Herzen the man. This naturally will involve a large measure of complication, but it is the only way to attack our problem and still hope for some degree of success. Zenkovsky emphasizes this by saying: "Herzen's personal life was very involved, both inwardly and outwardly", and that the "key to his philosophic ideas lies in his biography."¹ It is not the purpose here to retell the life of Herzen from cradle to casket, but only to use biography as the key to our understanding of Herzen and the method of attaining that understanding.

From early childhood onwards, Herzen was always sensitive to the world around him. Reality was for him the flesh and blood, everyday reality of worldly life. It was from this reality that Herzen took the raw materials for his thinking, and by his thinking he hoped to find the place of the free man in the real world. His interests came to be centered around anthropology and the philosophy of history. One might question at this point why it was that Herzen never entirely gave himself to any particular philosophic system, why he always seemed to reserve judgment. Berdyaev wrote: "It would be more correct to call Herzen a humanist-sceptic. He was not by nature a believing enthusiast like Belinsky."² Herzen's cognizance of the basic dualism in life was, in reality, so clear that he felt that the "flight of reality" into the untenable azure skies of speculative thought was nothing but pure sham and was destined to prove nothing. On the other hand Herzen's intimacy with reality expressed itself as human action. This last took the form of political and social agitation against the evils of the times. Religiously, Herzen was a paradox. Of this we shall hear

soon enough. But as we proceed to fish in the dark eddying waters of Herzen's biography remember that here was a man who sought in vain for an answer to the cruel realities of good and evil, hope and circumstance, a man who sought in the dark corners of the world and history with his own two eyes, and found there nothing but tragedy, despair, and chaos.

The only good source of information regarding Herzen's early childhood is contained in the memoirs, "*Byloe i Dumy*". They were written when Herzen was past forty, and are therefore not as valuable as a journal, which would have pin-pointed impressions at the time. The memoirs are important mainly as an evaluation. With an eye towards Herzen's "intimacy" with the reality of man and history, and especially towards the development of Herzen's religious attitude, we delve into Herzen's life and thought.

"Herzen" is a peculiar surname to be ushered in by such a Russian patronimic as Alexander Ivanovitch. Actually Herzen's father was named Jakovliev, and his mother, Luise Haag, a Lutheran, was Jakovliev's mistress. Little Alexander was "a child of my heart" according to Jakovliev, but to a fifteen year old Alexander, this sentiment was no longer endearing and consoling for the stigma of illegitimacy remained. The gradual realization of his unenviable situation brought with it a growing coolness towards his parents. Without a doubt this was one of the first shocks he sustained at the hands of reality and—circumstance. That Herzen was of a sensitive nature goes without saying. Take for instance his observations of serfdom as he saw it under his own roof:

One often speaks of the immorality of the serfs, but I would like to know what class is less corrupt than they. Certainly not the nobility or the officials. Perhaps the clergy? The servants about the house are very much attached to the children, but in this attachment there is nothing slavish—it is the love which binds weak and simple creatures. There used to be a dynastic-patriarchal relationship between master and servant, but no more. The master has lost his belief in his fatherly superiority. The servant too has just as little faith in his subordinate position; he bears injustice and oppression not as a God-given punishment or temptation but simply because he is powerless to defend himself; the weaker must always give way.³

Is it not surprising that a boy should wonder about the injustice of an institution such as serfdom, an institution which so many took for granted, and accepted through force of habit? What matters here is that Herzen as a boy did turn these thoughts over in his mind.

Herzen's religious education is not only interesting but almost decisive in the later formation of his views on religion. Since Herzen had few friends, and did not feel close to his parents, he was content to spend his time puttering about in his father's library which was well stocked with works of eighteenth century French literature. As it was, Herzen did not learn his catechism until after he had learned about Voltaire and after he had learned some German by attending the Lutheran Services with his mother. In order to be admitted into the university, it was mandatory that the applicant pass the catechetical examinations. In a country where the Church was so intimately bound up with the State it is not surprising that

declaration of faith was almost on a par with an oath of allegiance. Herzen at once recognized the empty formalism of such practice and regarded it as habitual conventionality but he also acknowledged a certain "respect" for the New Testament. His father

considered religion as something that every well-bred young man should have. His belief was a kind of habit; he believed because it was the thing to do and it could not be of harm. I often used to read the New Testament. I read it without any method, and though I did not understand everything, I accepted it with feeling and respect. In my youth I was an enthusiastic Voltairian, I loved his joking and irony, but I can never remember having taken the New Testament in my hands with a feeling of coolness and indifference. At every age and in every situation I have turned ever and again to this book and each time I felt peace and reconciliation penetrate my heart.⁴

The Decembrist Revolt was the event that shook Herzen loose from his childhood. It opened a new world to him and became the center of his moral existence. Throughout his life, Herzen referred again and again to this tragic episode which had made such an impression on him. Of the revolt:

I understood little, but I felt that I did not stand on the side where the cannon were fired, and victory proclaimed, where there were prisons and chains . . . The day after the shocking news of the execution arrived, high mass was celebrated in the Kremlin . . . Never had the gallows seen such triumph . . . I was only fourteen when I stood amongst the throng, not far from the altar which was prostituted by this Te Deum of thanksgiving; on that very day I vowed vengeance and pledged myself to fight against this throne, this altar, these cannon. After thirty years I remain under the same banner which I have never forsaken.⁵

Herzen's friendship with Boucheau, his French teacher, served to augment an already growing revolutionary sentiment. One of the conversations with the old revolutionary is recorded in the "Memoirs":

(H) : "Why was Louis XVI sent to the guillotine?"

(B) : "Because he was a traitor to his country."

(H) : "Would you have signed the death sentence had you been the judge?"

(B) : "With both hands."

This hour was worth more to me than all the conjunctives; it was enough for me, it was clear that the king had deserved his punishment.⁶ It seemed as though the issues in Herzen's mind had begun to crystalize. Politically revolutionary tendencies were already becoming evident.

What does all this show? First of all it indicates that his consciousness was anchored in the intense reality of his experiences. Secondly, it is apparent that directness of thought coupled with penetrating insight translated these dramatic experiences into tangible and non-abstract concepts. Politically, Herzen set himself on the side of the servant and opposed the cannon and gallows of a tyrannical government. All was as earthy and as direct as the conversation with Boucheau. Religiously, Herzen seemed to

have been an offended potential believer in God! Sample again the lines which described his devout father. Is it possible that a youngster could have discerned the symptoms of a "Gentleman's religion"? Then too, what of the Te Deum which bloodied and desecrated the sacred altar? Many an outraged Christian might have been moved to vent his wrath against a decaying Christendom. Herzen was not an atheist in knee pants as some contemporary writers would have us believe, but merely an enemy of Christendom as it existed in Russia one hundred years ago. Bewildered and confused, and offended by the action of the Church, Herzen wrote: "Soon another religion was to fill my heart."⁷ That religion was St. Simonism.

Saint Simonism, and related political philosophies of French origin did not capture Herzen's attention until his last year as a student at the University of Moscow. Preceding Herzen's interest in utopian neo-Christi-anity, there was a long period during which time Herzen and his intimate companion Ogaryov busily combed through the works of first Schiller and then Schelling. Herzen's first romantic encounter with Schiller's works came in 1827.⁸

Years later, Herzen recalled this dramatic interlude. "Schiller was our darling. The heroes of his dramas were for us living and existing creatures . . . It was remarkable that all of our dreams ended with exile to Siberia or the scaffold, and never with a happy ending."⁹ The study of Schiller's works soon generated an interest in Schelling. By the late twenties, Schelling had already found many an attentive ear among the Russian intelligentsia. From the remark that Herzen made on the first occasion of receiving a volume of Schelling's writings from Obelensky—"Obelensky respects Schelling but doesn't understand him well; he takes Pavlov on his word"—we must assume that Schelling's philosophy had already found its way to Herzen's ears.¹⁰ Entering the university the following year, Herzen chose to study the natural sciences. M. Pavlov was then teaching in that faculty and without a doubt had some influence on Herzen's philosophic thinking. Herzen recorded Pavlov's searching questions: "'So you want to know nature? But what is knowledge? What is nature?'"¹¹ According to Annenkov, the philosophy of Schelling was expounded by Pavlov with exceptional clearness, which did not in any way detract from the depth of the subject matter. The limits of his lectures were extended so as to include the whole of philosophic contemplation.¹²

The effects of Pavlov's philosophizing and Herzen's interest in Schelling are embodied in the essay "The Place of Man in Nature,"¹³ written in 1832 and Herzen's dissertation entitled "An Analytical Interpretation of the Copernican Solar System".¹⁴ In the essay, the history of nature is presented as one of evolution. There was admittedly an order but the substance of that order was of an ideal character. The evolution itself was seen to have been a creative development but at the same time a creation through destruction. "Through such destruction the purpose of creation is revealed," says Herder.¹⁵ After nature was brought into existence, "the Creator willed that nature be introduced to its master—man. Who else but man could have appreciated nature, would have venerated the Creator and have loved

Him?"¹⁶ Taken as a whole the essay was drawn up on the idealistic, organic lines of Schellingian philosophy. Faced as always with the basic dualism of life, Herzen convincingly announced that empiricism and rationalism, materialism and idealism, synthesis and analysis must all work together and thus provide the method by which man is to become fully conscious of his place in the world. The tone is one of idealistic yearning and optimistic wishful thinking, but in relation to the prevailing thought currents of the times—quite orthodox. The dissertation was similarly Schellingian. It might have been considered excellent had the authorities not found more Schelling in it than matters of purely astronomic interest.

In the midst of this speculative wandering, Herzen felt that there were no answers to be had; that something was missing. "The faith in revolution as Beranger propounded it was shattered, so we looked for something else and could find it neither in the Chronicle of Nestor nor in the transcendental idealism of Schelling."¹⁷ It was at this time (1833) that Herzen discovered the writings of St. Simon. Besides the nebulous fantasies of speculation, the idealizing of reality and so on, St. Simon and his political-religious utopian program seemed to stand out as sharply as a silhouette. Here was something tangible, a real answer to the problems of the real world. Saint Simonism was looked upon not only as a scheme which included a place for purposeful action (politics) but also as a religious philosophy of life, complete with the eschatological paradise on earth. Herzen enthusiastically pledged himself to this utopian humanitarian basis for action, thus becoming a neo-Christian Socialist and an agitator for a new political philosophy. Though it was primarily Herzen's political non-conformity that brought the secret police to his door, we are more interested in the new kind of religion Herzen discovered in Saint Simonism, ultimately the code which determined political action; as the theologians would say, the "state of his soul".

There can be no doubt regarding Herzen's hostile views of Christendom—the Church. The emotional shock of the Te Deum of 1826 in Moscow, the sudden realization of the Church's decay because of the touch of the State's unclean hand had offended him. The tragic encounter had left him shaken and suspicious. Christianity, as opposed to Christendom, began to take on a positive character. Judging as between the good and the evil, Herzen felt that Christianity in its purest sense must be good according to all human standards, while the Church must be evil.

In 1828, Herzen described his religious instructor Father Vassily in this way:

I saw the flame in his eyes as he taught, and have caught glimpses of tears in his eyes during the liturgy. But then, he influenced me much less than would have been expected. The reason for this was partially because of the teacher's materialistic sophisms, his boasting of free-thinking. Had he accepted Christianity evangelically and simply, had he not so much explained to me the mystical character of religion, I am certain he might have shortened the way by which I could have attained a religious outlook; I look upon Vassily Vassilivitch as a flashing meteor, I love him, but listen and pass by. The hour of religiosity in my soul has not yet come.¹⁸

Looking upon Christianity as he did as a positive good, Herzen had reached a decision. There was a conviction, and from the point of view of rational conviction the necessity of having faith (mysticism) seemed not only superfluous but liable to suspicion. Christianity is a grand thing; I *listen* but pass by.

Directing our attention back to Saint Simonism, and its inherent "Neo-Christianity", consider what the middle aged Herzen had to say as he looked back on his Saint Simon days. These were

magnificent words embracing a whole world of new relations between people, a world of health, of spirituality, of beauty, a naturally moral world and therefore morally pure. . . . Good people understand that the purifying baptism of the flesh in Christendom is nothing but the last anointing; the religion of life becomes the religion of death, the religion of beauty becomes the religion of flagellation—of redemption through fasting and prayer. But now the crucified flesh is resurrected and is no longer ashamed of itself; man has attained an harmonious unity. . . . Saint Simonism became the basis of our convictions and to a certain extent it has remained so.¹⁹

Herzen wrote this as a defender of a "New Christianity", and as an opponent of Christendom. Religion of life was opposed to religion of death. Here was not only the contradiction between Christianity and Christendom but the contradiction between the two elements of the Paradox. Choosing but the triumphal side of the Paradox, using Saint Simonism as a basis for the choice, Herzen attained what he called a religion of life. This was but the result of Christendom's insistence that humiliation was only for the poor and the weak, that death and the next world were but a sop for their feelings.

The first mention of Saint Simon in Herzen's letters occurs in the one to Ogaryov (19/7/1833).

You are right, St. Simonism has our interest . . . It is necessary to lay a new foundation for European society—justice, morality, enlightenment. Let us take the clean basis of Christianity. How fine and exalted it is; just look at its disciples—mysticism is dark and obscure.²⁰

What about this? We have little to go on. Obviously, Herzen, as always, worked from the particulars to the general. It was clear to him that the world was in disorder, that justice and morality were practically unknown, and that Christianity had somehow been distorted out of its original shape. The evils of Christendom were collectively dubbed "mysticism" by Herzen at that time. Nevertheless, Christianity seemed to contain something valuable and that something was seen to have been the triumph, the glory, and the exaltation of Christ. Of the humiliation—that has never been a popular topic of thought. In a letter to Ogaryov a month later (7/8/1833) Herzen was more explicit in his definition of the Christian religion. At the time when paganism had failed to provide the necessary spiritual guide for the ancient Romans and Greeks, when society was no longer held together by harmony but by artificial synthesis, when:

man demanded a renewal when the world awaited a reformation, there was born in Nazareth the son of a carpenter, Christ. He was to re-

concile God with man (according to the Apostle Paul) . . . Christ turns man towards the way of truth, but the way of truth is the way of God. 'All men are equal', said Christ. 'Love one another, help one another',—there is the vast foundation upon which Christianity was created. But people did not understand Christianity. The first phase of (Christendom) was mystic—Catholicism. The second phase was the transfer from mysticism to philosophy—Luther. And now the third phase is under way, the true human Falansterie—perhaps St. Simonism???

Through the Neo-Christianity of Saint Simon, Herzen wished to awaken the world to a new sense of Christian socialism. Faced with the problems of human society and seeking for a solution which would secure for man justice, freedom, happiness and an ordered social world, Herzen saw within Christianity many truths which could be applied to the problem at hand. Even though the message of the New Testament contained much that was commendable, though the application of bits and pieces of Christianity seemed to insure the success of Christian Socialism, Herzen was plagued by doubt when confronted with Christianity itself. "There is a particular demon in me—wrote Herzen—doubt. I don't have that fanatic living faith—there is conviction but I have no faith."²² Is it not strange that he could have had conviction in regard to Christianity and still not have had faith? It has long been the practice of many to identify "Religious convictions" with Religious faith, without being conscious as Herzen was of the subtle masquerading that was taking place. Turning these two words over in our hands we find that if one has faith he has a conviction, but a conviction per se is not necessarily faith in the Christian sense. Faith can produce conviction, but conviction under no circumstances can produce faith. To have a conviction or "convictions" about Christianity without having faith in Christianity is to have nothing. Conviction, in Herzen's case was apparently (we must say apparently because no amount of semantics will tell us automatically what is implied) a conviction about Christianity, not a Christian conviction. What is meant is simply this: conviction was based on rational knowledge, not on faith. Herzen must have viewed Christianity both as a complete and integral truth, otherwise he would not have complained of a lack of faith, and he must also have viewed Christianity as a collection of truths which to his mind seemed valid. It has always been easier for man to acknowledge segments of Christian Truth than it has been to accept Christian Truth. Approaching Christianity from without, as Herzen was doing, conviction about Christianity based on human knowledge can be nothing but a stumbling block, for the Paradox is posed there expressly for the purpose of annihilating those preconceived notions, those convictions. If there must be true conviction in regard to Christianity, then faith must precede it. Perhaps this "conviction but no faith" was nothing but a diplomatic move on Herzen's part to open an "alliance" with Christianity, the simple acknowledgement of several common points of agreement. Neo-Christian Socialism, in this instance, was neither Christian, nor new, for socialism as conceived by man and for man was the determining factor and the real basis for a necessarily rational conviction

and not Christianity. Neither was the experiment a new one, for in ages past the Gospels have been repeatedly "renewed" with a view towards making Christianity better serve man's rational and therefore fallible schemes. In allying himself with Christianity, without himself having had faith, Herzen attempted to take a neutral route. But Christianity by its very nature will not and can not tolerate a neutral attitude towards itself. With greater faith in himself, with more courage in his conviction, with greater honesty, Herzen could have become a devout atheist at once.

Such was the prevailing mood of the young Herzen at the end of his university career and at the beginning of five years of exile. Temporarily at least, Herzen had found spiritual stability in his socialist convictions, which included certain convictions about Christianity. Though he was definitely opposed to Christendom, that is, hostile to the organized Church, Herzen was not opposed to Christianity. According to the spirited description of the religious milieu of Saint Simonism in the "Memoirs", there was much that was taken from Christianity. It is all too typical of the intellectual, romantic, approach in that only those aspects of Christianity were accented which were complimentary to man's own high appraisal of himself, to man's confidence in his worthiness, and to his conviction that earthly paradise could be had through his own efforts. Because Christ preached that he who shall lose his life shall save it, Christianity was easily described as a "religion of death", as a sacrifice of this life. Without faith, those words can only appear as such, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for and a conviction of things unseen."²³ It is a grotesque thing to behold, this cloaking of life as we know it as life in Christ. Having taken the buds from the growing and living Christianity, and having arranged them to his liking in the vase of his own mortal being, nourishing them with the water of his own knowledge and conviction, these blooms were doomed to wither away. Here is the illusion, here is the deception that men delight in practicing on themselves. The eventual withering away is usually blamed on the defects of the blossoms and not on the one who cut them.

Herzen's group in Moscow had attracted considerable attention because of its unorthodox political and philosophic tendencies. The Third Division had long kept a watchful eye on both Herzen and Ogaryov and the hour soon came to snuff out this insidious threat to the Church and throne. On the pretext that the Tsar had been made the subject of a humorous and mocking drinking song, the police moved in to arrest them. In July 1834, Herzen was taken to the local prison and after a perfunctory inquiry he was sent to Perm as an exile in the following April. The next month he was sent to Vyatka. In January 1838, he was again transferred, but to Vladimir. Finally, in the summer of 1839, Herzen was granted permission to return to Moscow. For five years then, Herzen was separated from his friends, from Natalie Zacharina, his fiancée, and from the life he had known. The separation is an important factor in the understanding of Herzen's thought not only during his exile but afterwards as well. During this period there were, in addition to the effects of the exile itself, the combined influences of his fiancée, Natalie Zacharina, and the architect, Alexander Witberg. For want

of a better term, this span of years has been designated as Herzen's "mystic period".

With the coming of a life of confinement, suffering, and isolation, Herzen's whole nature underwent a change. It might be said that there was a note of repentance that ran through these years like a basic musical theme which governed its many variations. In a sense, it was a religious experience. Let us see what kind it was.

The five years of exile brought the religious elements of his Christian socialism into full view. His reading during exile included works of Swedenborg, Jakob Boehme, and the *Evangelium*, while his pen mirrored the thoughts, which were born under such influences, in the form of the highly romantic-mystic letters to Natalie and Herzen's two plays in blank verse entitled "William Penn" and "Licinius". Under the stress of imprisonment, and the promise of more suffering yet to come Herzen's sceptic nature began to weaken. Shortly before Herzen's transfer from his Moscow prison to Perm in 1835, he wrote to Natalie concerning the Passion of Christ, how He comforted even in His suffering. Grasping for support in his own suffering Herzen, asks:

But where is our Christ? Is it possible that we are disciples without a teacher, apostles without a Messiah? . . . The commission charged me with St. Simonism; I am no St. Simonist, but I feel that I have much in common with it. There is no true life without faith . . .²⁴

Already there was a reversal. Rather than seeking things that Christianity had in common with his own views of the true life, Herzen now recognized that faith was the determining factor and that all (including St. Simonism) was relative to that faith in Christ. Later that same summer, Herzen wrote to Natalie: "Faith,—it has not forsaken me; what then would I be without it?"²⁵ Herzen's meeting with Witberg came during the fall of 1835. A year of prison had mellowed Herzen's self-confidence and had also made him aware of the nature of faith. Years later, in retrospect, Herzen described this episode in his life as the result of "the separation, exile, the religious exaltation of the letters I received, the love which penetrated my being and the oppressing sense of remorse which assisted Witberg in his influence over me."²⁶

Witberg is of great importance in the study of this particular period of Herzen's life. For two years, while Herzen was in Vyatka, he lived under the same roof with Witberg and his family. Witberg was of Scandinavian descent, and first gained notoriety in Russia for being the architect who submitted the winning set of plans for a great cathedral Alexander wanted to build in commemoration of the victory over the French. Herzen said that Witberg's mysticism was due in part to his nordic blood, and compared him to Swedenborg. Alexander II, who towards the latter part of his reign became imbued with a vague mystic religiosity, got along well with the young architect. He is reported to have said about Witberg, "In his hands the stones speak."²⁷ Witberg's plans were accepted and work was begun, with Witberg in charge. But here troubles arose. Metropolitan Philaret, and the Governor-General of Moscow and other very important persons resented Witberg's authoritative position. Their jealous conniving

combined with Witberg's ignorance of the finer points of bureaucratic high-handedness brought his inevitable ruin. Witberg was unjustly accused and convicted of misappropriation of funds and was forthwith dispatched to Vyatka and exile. Though his plans for the great cathedral on the Sparrow Hills outside Moscow had to be given up, he did not have to sacrifice his mystic faith. Witberg was a dedicated and sincere man, a serious thinker, and personally admirable. Herzen was drawn to this man as an intellectual companion and a friend. In this pleasant atmosphere, ideas were constantly interchanged, the result being Herzen's own turn towards a mystic faith in Christianity.

Though Herzen was in no way inclined to be sympathetic towards organized religion and especially the Orthodox Church, he was nevertheless captivated by Christian themes. Herzen's love for the Gospels braided together with the heritage of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, produced a romantic religiosity, rather occult, mystic, and "innerlich". It is particularly interesting to note the manner in which Herzen deals with the problems of theodicy, the dualism of good and evil, from his new religious vantage point. "At present, I am thoroughly interested in religious thought—the fall of Lucifer, as a vast allegory; I have reached some very important results."²⁸ Following up this line of thought, Herzen later wrote (22/9/1836) that:

all the theories about humanity are but rubbish. Humanity is a fallen angel; revelation has told us this, but we want to reach for a formulation of existence all by ourselves and only approach stupidity. All, who have understood, have believed in a lost paradise—Vico, Pascal . . . And what is left to us? These two currents are in contradiction, they struggle, and direct us into their fray: Egoism—this is gravitation, anguish, contraction, the direct heritage of Lucifer; and Love—this is light, expansiveness, the direct heritage of God.²⁹

The idea that mankind is a fallen angel was not original but in fact quite typical of the mystic religiosity of eighteenth century Western European thought. Herzen reached his conclusions in a very natural way, and in doing so provided at least a temporary explanation of the evils of this world. Here were fallen angels imprisoned on the earth. And to be sure these "angels did not want to become men."³⁰ "The body in the material sense, and egoism in the spiritual sense—here are the means by which Lucifer acts against the Word became flesh."³¹ Pursuing the Fallen Angel theme further, Herzen was convinced that Lucifer was a good sort before his fall.³² Herzen's religious outlook was dominated by the idea that mankind is neither one fallen angel or a collection of fallen angels. Biblically, there is a basis for such a turn of thought. But Herzen's interpretation of the "star which fell out of Heaven" was one that amalgamated, or fused the doctrine of original sin with Lucifer, thus permitting the inclusion of all men as fallen angels, prisoners of the earth, but still essentially good. The Fall, one hundred years ago was considered an historical event in time, and therefore encouraged the notion that man is basically good, but by Adam's Fall man was cursed and had to accept this destiny. Since that time however, theologians have considered the Fall as a condition of every man re-

ardless of time, and that by the mere virtue of man's being man, he is sinful by nature and can be saved only by faith and forgiveness. Religious thought both in Russia and the West in Herzen's time nourished the tendency towards a fallen angel mysticism. Herzen's theology was actually an apology for man, a mystic anthropology. Mystic occultism was born of the problem of reconciling the evils of this world with a God who must be good. Starting from the premise that if man in this world is evil, then God must be good, but then if man were created by God he must be good by nature and perfect. The only explanation that would fit was the idea of the fallen angel. Such a religious outlook is always bound to the double standard of the power of good, and the power of evil. A mystic "away with the body" was the way to rid oneself of evil, not forgiveness of sin.³³

Herzen augmented his religious-social convictions by writing two plays, "Licinius" and "William Penn". The first dealt with the conflict between Christianity and a decadent Roman civilization. Licinius was a young man of patrician background but he was inwardly tormented by the evils of the society which surrounded him. His death and subsequent resurrection through the powers of Apostolic Christianity turned him to Christianity and the social regeneration that Christianity promised. "William Penn" was also a story of conflict, but between Quakerism and decaying feudalism. These plays add flavor to Herzen's purely theological speculations, and give them direction. Herzen's interest in religious matters becomes clear once one has recognized the import of these two literary (not first rate) works. Doubtless, Herzen placed himself into the same category as his two heroes—an evangelist of socialism. Both plays reflect Herzen's romantic-mystic religious frame of mind, they show the priority which the social problem held in his thought, and reveal Herzen's desire for *action* in making the world a better place in which to live. Even then, Herzen was ridden by contradiction. How was he to act in renovating the world while he was convinced that one must be rid of the world in order to attain a mystic identification with God. The theology of Lucifer was at best a very shaky foundation for Herzen's striving, for what comfort could possibly derive from vague recollections of a Paradise Lost? What hope could there be for such "fallen angels" in the face of dreadful circumstance? What anguish and fear would come at the sudden realization that man had not terminated his fall from angeldom but was in fact still falling from a brink few angels know of.

As was said before, Herzen's views stemmed from the mystic Rosenkreuzer Martinist traditions of the eighteenth century. In addition to this there were also the influences of first Schiller and then Schelling. Throughout all this, the Neo-Christianity of Saint Simon is visible—the social-religious element. By the end of the 1830's, Herzen's "Geistesleben" resembled, more than anything else, a strange melange; a make shift social religious philosophy doomed to shipwreck on the shoals of circumstance.

Several places in Herzen's correspondence reveal his interest in Providence and order on one hand and circumstance and chance on the other. Herzen's inability to arrive at a logical and rational philosophy of history which would automatically explain the caprice of fortune, coupled with

his sceptic disinclination to believe in things unseen, led Herzen to his final resignation in the form of a "philosophy of the irrational". Of this we shall hear more later on. From Herzen's exile period onwards, the problem of circumstance governed his thought, and thus gives us at least a chaotic route to follow in this review of his life which at first glance seems to show no consistency whatsoever.

Herzen wrote to Natalie (10/11/36): "Circumstance—nothing but trash! There is no chance! This stupidity was dreamed up out of lack of faith."³⁴ Then later (30/1/37): "I firmly believe in the strict consistency and accuracy of Divine Providence."³⁵ Herzen was sure of the existence of an incontestable general law, but the specific nature of that law he considered as a secret of God's. However strongly he believed in his concept of Providence, there was still room for conjecture on the problem of the individual's fate in this world. Herzen definitely felt the presence of the bug-a-boo of circumstance, and it is quite possible that this talk of Providence was but a form of "whistling in the dark".

Returning from his long exile in late 1839, Herzen established contact with the remnants of the Kruzhok Stankevitcha, principally Bakunin and Belinsky. Herzen was certainly not entirely uninformed, for he had already more than a speaking acquaintance with Hegelianism. In 1833, he took Hegelianism for an "ideology of despotism".³⁶ But in 1839, he happened to read Gieszkowski's "Prolegomena of Historiosophy" and through that became deeply interested in Hegel. Bakunin and Belinsky, in Herzen's eyes, had grossly misinterpreted Hegel. Herzen saw clearly that a crisis had been reached and that the object of all this study, the cause of human freedom, was being compromised. Exile had insulated Herzen from the rocketing enthusiasms of Muscovite intellectualdom, and so he was in a better position than many others to take objective stock of the situation into which Russian Hegelianism had got itself. Doctrinaire concepts, the ever-present abstractness, optimistic religious mania, and above all the cruelly distorted view of reality then being broadcast by Belinsky in the "Borodino" articles (with Bakunin's tacit consent) all irritated Herzen beyond description.

Herzen had no hope of arousing this ponderous heap of quietism, contemplation, and theoretical deliberation which rested upon the strong support of an apparently fool-proof Hegelian logic, unless he himself made a thorough examination of this remarkable system. Starting from his basic conviction that the key to truth lies within the problem of freedom, and the problem of the free man here and now, he turned his attention to both the old "Egor Fedorovitch" (Hegel) and the correctors of the old man's works, the Left Hegelians, in search of what he felt to be an important discovery yet unnoticed by his more doctrinaire friends. Herzen was by no means hostile to this philosophy, but it seemed that the root of the trouble with Russian Hegelianism lay in its interpretation and application. He joked pointedly about the Hegelians in his memoirs, but these barbs were directed chiefly towards the ones who had sapped the vitality inherent in that philosophy. "The Byzantine theology is exactly the same external casuistic, the same juggling of logical formulae, as the formally conceived notion of Hegelian dialectic."³⁷ The schoolboy attitude towards reality

engendered by the famous words, "all that is real is rational" was the target of his complaint. According to Herzen the casuistic, the logical sleight of hand, the warped view of the world as "Holy Prussianism" masked the vital fact that, taken as a whole, Hegelianism was closely allied to mathematics, in fact it was "an algebra of revolution which exerts a liberating effect, which leaves no stone of the old outlived Christian world upon another."³⁸

Beginning thus, Herzen proceeded to study Hegel and the Left Hegelians thoroughly, in order to drive the System to its ultimate conclusion. As the goal, he wished to bring Hegelianism back to concreteness—the human personality. Away with formalism, and abstract theorizings. Man's living personalism is what should count, and ought not be artificially and unnecessarily sacrificed to an "Allgemeinheit". Herzen had no intention of divorcing himself from Hegel (before he had ever become attached) but was bent on injecting life into the petrified philosophy. It is not our task here to review in full the two important philosophical articles "Dilettantism in Science"³⁹ and "Letters on the Study of Nature".⁴⁰ Very good accounts are already at hand concerning these works, but they are primarily devoted to the exposition of a complete philosophical "Weltanschauung".⁴¹ What is of prime importance here is not a long drawn out repetition of what has already been said, but a careful attentiveness to the above mentioned spiritual crisis and to that *part* of Herzen's philosophic outlook which throws light upon that crisis. But Chizhevsky writes:

In what manner the religious crisis came about, we do not know. At any rate, Hegel was not the cause of it. (Labry claimed that the philosophic Enlightenment of the XVIIIth century might have had something to do with it) Herzen found support in Hegel. Feuerbach, he hardly knew at that time.⁴²

Jakowenko disputes this last point, held by Chizhevsky. Spet and Labry, and backs up his argument solidly.⁴³ The dispute about possible influences from the side of the Hegelian Left and especially from Feuerbach arose out of a lack of extant correspondence and the fact that Herzen kept no journal during the 1840-1841 period. During this time though, it is certain that Herzen read publications edited by Ruge; that he was in close contact with Belinsky both before and after the "Borodino" episode and it is well known that Belinsky came under the sway of the "Lefts" during 1840. The "Memoirs" record Herzen's complaint about the abstractness of Russian Hegelianism which dates from 1840-41. Relieved to find support for his leanings he said: "Feuerbach was the first to begin speaking in more human terms."⁴⁴ Perhaps this was a remark made in hindsight, but the whole atmosphere which surrounded Herzen at that time was one filled with Feuerbachian ideas—and it so happened that Herzen's own sentiments made him at one with the prevailing situation.

Both of Herzen's articles presented a noncasuistic view of Nature and Science. The basis was Hegelian, the tone was reminiscent of Schelling, and the whole affair was dominated by the Act. The thought was fundamentally anthropocentric. In short, all movement was regulated by Hegelian dialectic, its concept of nature—vitalistic. Truth lives in the eternal movement—

in the dialectic pulse-beat of life. Reason doesn't know this person, but personality in general. The person must go down before science for this is the process of rising to a self-conscious, freely rational personality. In science, nature is restored and becomes subject to logical necessity. Eternal movement, continual striving, the ever-coming final realization of nature and the ultimate defeat of all circumstance can never include actual realization. Intermixed with these professions of faith in an objective illusive truth there is a significant dash of doubt. Nature will become free from circumstance, but nature can never be thoroughly investigated. To Herzen, there seemed to be something in nature that was out of joint, something that defied man's knowing nature and himself. Much later (1848) he wrote that all existing in time has the element of chance; a capricious border outside of which there can be no further rational development. Thus in outlining a scheme which was designed to eliminate chance and at the same time bring freedom to the person, Herzen ultimately found that circumstance alone could destroy all. It has been said that Herzen's religious ideas of the thirties were replaced by his new interpretation of Hegel. Truth exists in time, in eternal movement, in a restless ocean. Kierkegaard also went through a similar period of revolt against the master, which ultimately brought him to a new consciousness of the individual—before Christ. Both Herzen and Belinsky followed the same course in restating the case for the individual, but both crushed themselves in rather similar ways by again following precisely the same road which they had just forsaken. Hegelianism is a hoax, according to Kierkegaard. "The passionate question of truth does not even arise." The great Hegelian secret is that "everything is relative in the continuing world process."⁴⁵ In the eternal movement, which Herzen believed to be truth, "there is no decisive result anywhere."⁴⁶ What comfort could there be in knowing that in the end everything will become clear? How can the individual defend himself against circumstance now when he knows that in eternity somewhere there will be no such thing as circumstance. Kierkegaard mocked the continuing world process by quoting an anecdote from Plutarch's "Moralia". Old Xenocrates of the academy was seen engaged in seeking for the truth. The fellow asked a friend, "'Who is the old man?' And when he was told that Xenocrates was a wise man, one of those occupied in the search for virtue, he cried: 'But when does he propose to use it?'"⁴⁷ What Kierkegaard has said applies also to Herzen. Turning his words to fit Herzen, we should see that Herzen was attempting to base his eternal happiness on what he thought was eternal truth, but what was actually the objective historical, which in the end is but an approximation. "It is a self-contradiction and therefore comic to be infinitely interested in that which in its maximum still always remains an approximation."⁴⁸ The individual is tragic on account of his passion, and comical because he attaches it to an approximation. The reader probably wonders why this sudden detour into Denmark. Simply to show the direction in which Herzen was traveling. To show how ridiculous and how tragic was his passionate yearning for a certainty which excluded circumstance, for there always "lurks some such concern in a man, a

wish to lay hold of something so really fixed that it can exclude all dialectics; but this desire is an expression of cowardice."⁴⁹ Herzen revolted against Hegel, in the name of the individual, in the name of the subject—but did not Herzen become intensely more enslaved in that he again subordinated his personal being to a "truth" that admittedly could never become truth, since truth is eternal movement—in history? With scepticism, without faith in Christ, in the Paradox, would not such a man go entirely mad standing as he does in the most contradictory position imaginable? Abject fatalism and melancholy pessimism could be the only fruits of his fruitless labors; the attempt to base his eternal happiness on a mere approximation, on a basis of circumstance.

So far we have only been probing the periphery of the question of Herzen's atheism, touching upon certain philosophical conditions. Herzen's anti-religiosity was neither so clearly defined as Bakunin's nor as passionately felt as Belinsky's. In the main, Herzen's anti-religiosity was internal—rather like a cancer which thrived on a lush diet of perplexing contradictions. Berdyaev has called Herzen a sceptic, not entirely an atheist, and he is partially correct.⁵⁰ Herzen was a sceptic with respect to his own rational philosophy, which eventually devoured him—much like an insect munches on its own tail. Throughout there was a stern reluctance to reject his pride and his human reason in the name of the Paradox, that is, to have faith in Christ,—but—he did ultimately renounce reason and history as utter nonsense in the *name of nothingness*. One is usually called a sceptic when one becomes a sceptic through the exercise of his mental rational powers. It is a contradiction when the object of scepticism is precisely that which the generating powers of scepticism have created as an object of belief. To cancel out both, there is nothing left, for faith in the absolute Paradox, utterly divorced from and inconceivable by reason, had already been by-passed. Enough speculation. Now we shall come to fact (historical science's elaborate pseudonym for approximation) pertinent to Herzen's struggle with circumstance, and his rejection of faith.

Going back now to the last year of Herzen's exile, we pick up the thread of circumstance. In May of 1838, Herzen married Natalie Zacharina. Their life together in Vladimir was idyllic; and their marriage a very happy one. In the following year they awaited the birth of their first child. "God is entrusting this tiny creature to me, and I shall direct him towards God", wrote Herzen to Ogaryov.⁵¹ The baby, Alexander Alexandrovitch was born that June. After the exile, while the Herzens lived in Moscow and then in Petersburg, the family came upon bitter times.⁵² Natalie was seriously ill for a long time and their next child, Ivan, died shortly after his birth (1/1841). During these difficult months, Herzen received a comforting letter from Ogaryov emphasizing the idea that "occasional circumstance" could not upset the harmony of existence. Herzen caustically replied: "Your consolation is one of the manifestations of deceitful monastic passivity."⁵³ Herzen was approaching a serious personal and spiritual crisis. Carefully Fate aimed another blow. On Christmas day, 1841, Herzen wrote his friend Ketcher: "Hello and goodbye. Botkin came to me

on the day of our baby's funeral. Fate. Fate. I feel old and Natasha is not well."⁵⁴ The shattering effects of these repeated shocks can not but have accelerated Herzen's movement away from the roseate dreams of a lost Eden, away from that neutral Christian faith of his own making. Long ago he had turned away from the paradox in indecision—convinced but not faithful, but only now did he begin to show signs of an unqualified turning away. At the time of the loss of the second child, the Herzen's were residing in Novgorod—in exile once more. With the acquaintance of Mme. Philippovitcha, Herzen's religious qualms came to a head.

This woman had also been through some harrowing experiences for she had just lost all of her three children in a scarlet fever epidemic.

Her life had lost its meaning; it was without direction and flowed aimlessly onwards. I have known few marriages as happy as her's, for what bound them was an inner bond in misfortune. Their fate was chained by the grip of those six cold hands. The desolate mother sought salvation from the doubts of this world through secret comfortings, she let herself be deceived by religion which flatters the human heart. For her, mysticism was a serious matter and no mere sentimentality. Instead of hating death, she had learned since the death of her three children to hate life. That is exactly what Christianity, this complete apotheosis of death needs; the contempt of the earthly, and contempt of the flesh has no other meaning. Her attacks on my philosophy were original. She ironically assured me that all the dialectic arts and craftiness were naught but the beating of drums with which the coward seeks to deafen his conscience. (She said to Herzen) 'You can reach neither a personal God nor immortality of the soul through philosophy, you have not the courage to become an atheist and thus give up all claim to a life after death. You are too human not to stand aghast at the consequence, an inner repellent pushes such consequence away; then you get the notion to devise your logical magic, you shut your eyes in order to attain that which religion teaches us in its childish and native form.'⁵⁵

There was a third party to the discussion, a doctor of medicine, who was a disciple of Schelling, and he argued "with citations; had an answer for everything; had no doubts, and was unusually believing".⁵⁶ Neither Herzen nor Mme. Philippovitcha could tolerate his roundabout pantheism, his lacquered faith.

I turned more in favor of my opponent, Mme. Philippovitcha, but not in a way which she would have liked. 'You are quite right' I said to her, 'and I am ashamed that I have argued with you; of course there is neither a personal spirit nor immortality of the soul, for that reason it was so difficult to prove that they exist. See how clear and natural everything is when one drops all these impulsive suppositions.' My words confused her, but she countered quickly, I am sorry for you, perhaps it is well so. You will not long remain in this state, for your views are too comfortless and drab. But here is our doctor—he is

incurable, he is unafraid, he is so in the fog that he can't see a step ahead of himself."⁵⁷

In the very next line we read: "Two, three months later, Ogaryov visited us; he brought me Feuerbach's 'Wesen des Christentums', and when I read the first lines I leaped with joy."⁵⁸ Although there is lack of historical proof to the effect that Herzen was under the influence of Feuerbach during 1841, it certainly seems, from the above account of Herzen's stand on the question of immortality, that the Feuerbachian theme was present. Religion to him was illusion, man was deceived, the world was devalued, Christianity was a religion of death, it was childish and for children. His opponent had even ridiculed his dialectical logisms in favor of a direct faith in a childish and naive form. In April 1842, his diary records: "Childishly-religious people are happy—life for them is thoroughly easy."⁵⁹ Referring to the discussion of three months previous, he said: "Unhappiness filled her soul and it was transformed into foolish blessedness."⁶⁰ Childish Christianity appeared—and rightly so—to be utterly foolish, fantastic and out of place.

The childish construction of Christianity is essentially that of fantasy-intuition, and the idea of fantasy-intuition is commensurability, and commensurability is paganism, whether it is power, glory, beauty, or it is hidden within a little humoristic contradiction which, however, is not concealment but an incognito easily discerned.⁶¹

Could Herzen have been blamed for having then turned his back, refusing to partake in a comical religious scheme which would make children of adult thinking men? Precisely the mistaken concept of "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not" on the part of the "Christian" defender, confirmed Herzen's already deep suspicion that religion (Christianity) was nothing but man-made illusion. Herzen's contemporary, Kierkegaard, (if I am allowed to quote him once again) said:

A childish orthodoxy, a pusillanimous Bible interpretation, a foolish and unchristian defense of Christianity, a bad conscience on the part of the defenders with respect to their own relation to it, *all this has in our time its share in occasioning passionate and frantic attacks upon Christianity*. One should not chaffer, should not want to alter Christianity, should not overdo the thing by putting up resistance at the wrong place, but simply should take care that it remains what is was, to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness—not just any sort of a foolish thing in which the Jews and Greeks find no offense but smile at it, and are only incited against it by the defense advanced for it."⁶²

The defense produced the attack, and from this point of crisis onwards, Herzen became ever more atheistic in his views. In 1840, Herzen sensed that he must ultimately revolt from Hegel, but it was not until this time that the break became clearly evident. There was no tempestuous letter of resignation in the style of Belinsky's letter to Botkin, but rather a gradual slide towards the left, towards Feuerbach. Feuerbach was a materialist, and from his Hegelian background fashioned an optimistic "religion of humanity", but Herzen had finished with "general cate-

gories" of all kinds. He became more and more individualistic and personalistic in his opinions. Hegel was dropped in the sense that his general world outlook was denied, but Herzen still clung to the fragments. From these fragments, from a newly won independence from God for each man—not humanity—and from the aura of utopian dreams of a paradise for men in this world, which was but the residue of Herzen's Saint Simon sympathies, Herzen began to fashion his individualist, personalist socialism. No one "system" was adhered to, for his ideas were supported by various permutations and combinations of ideas from radically differing sources. What must be emphasized here is the fact that Herzen sought grounds for a subjective socialism in contrast to the pernicious objective world order proposed by Hegel and what he considered to be the ridiculous childish-fantasy religion of Christianity. One may advance the opinion that his two articles of 1842 and 1844 were Hegelian. If one seeks Hegelianisms in them they can be found, but the central thought of them is far to the left of Hegel. But now that the break had been made, what of those circumstances which had driven Herzen along the road to crisis? Would the questions he had decided remain decided?

In October 1842, Herzen's close friend Wadim Passek died, and Herzen was at the bedside. "A mystery, a terrible, fearsome mystery. How evident it must appear that *Jenseits* (the world beyond) is but a fantasy, that a soul without a body is impossible, that the soul is something only when it is in the body and with it."⁶³ Then in December, the Herzens lost their third child. The following March, the diary discloses this remark: "Through immeasurable labor and even with his blood, man amasses (his spiritual wealth) grain by grain, but chance seizes and with one senseless blow destroys all one has strived for."⁶⁴ In an article "Caprice and Reflection", which appeared at the end of 1842, Herzen began to express more clearly his disavowal of religion, but at the same time continued to wonder at the powers of chance to which this life on earth is subject.

Religion fixes itself upon another world, away from the evils of this world . . . Religion has two categories, the universal divine personality, and the individual personality of each man. Formalism decreases the living personality, to the advantage of the abstract intervening universality. In regard to marriage, religion says: love thy wife for she is the one given you by God. Religion binds the personality with unbreakable bonds; here marriage is mystery . . . For you, as a person, there is no way out, indeed if you fall, that is circumstance. It is necessary to have men, but you—not at all . . . The world is one of circumstance . . .⁶⁵

Herzen maintains, in connection with this, that chance is what feeds religion. It leads man to a desperate feeling of guilt, leads him in his unhappiness to willingly calling down punishment upon himself. Here is the point where religion opens up the possibility of another world. "To exist—that is the highest good; love is the apotheosis of life".

Herzen was already far into the writing of his "Dilittantism" series. Circumstance was to be overcome in the end through science, and the emancipation of the individual personality. Rationalism of man is not

outside of nature but is the reasoning of nature about itself. Gradually, Herzen's belief came to be centered about the Act—the revolutionary act in the name of "Republic". The act was, in essence, the condition for the attainment of man's real personality, his happiness. Herzen's eyes had long been turned towards the West, for in the West he believed the first successful act would take place. As if hoping against hope, he proceeded to develop his idea of individualistic socialism, ready at a moment's notice to take part in a revolutionary act. This was to him the way to conquer his arch-enemy—circumstance.

To say that Herzen was an atheist is true enough, for he had denied God. But there is something more. Did he confront the Paradox represented in Christ? The author is inclined to believe that he did, and at an early date. In 1833, he had said that there was conviction but no faith. But one confrontation is not enough, for faith is a day by day occurrence, a living thing which can never become static, ever certain, but "which has in every moment the infinite dialectic of uncertainty present with it."⁶⁸ But during the "mystic period" he could not have met the Paradox, or if he did, it was misunderstood. Herzen's speculative mystic religiosity might be recognized by many as an example of real Christian faith. The speculative mystic approach proceeds not from the encounter, but from nothingness. Man exercises himself to the extent that he continuously bombards the historical Christ with thoughts and conjectures as if in the hope of reducing Him to exasperation thus forcing Christianity to reveal itself in certainty as eternal truth. This can not involve faith in the real dynamic sense. It is actually a by-play, an assault, backed by contemplative or rational powers, such as man has, against the Paradox. It is not faith freely given, but an offense to God, who desires man's freely given love. In attempting to destroy the Paradox in the interests of eternal truth, man in so doing destroys the only way in which man's faith and love can be enjoined by God. Shall we call this atheism? No, because God is not directly denied, in fact God was the goal of Herzen's fruitless striving. He wanted faith, but would believe in nothing short of certainty. Therein lies the tragedy, and the dialectic. Herzen did not become an atheist in the sense that he outwardly denied God until 1842. Feuerbach, it seems, gave Herzen a new idea, and that—religion is but an illusion, thin air, man's own glorified dream of himself. After having struggled so mightily with the problem of faith (in certainty) it was most natural that Herzen should have thrown over the whole mystic speculative attempt which was but a saber charge against a desert mirage. Contained in the dialectic of the approach to the Paradox, both a la Witherberg and a la Hegel, there was an interest in God, a focusing upon God, although the approach itself was an insult to God. It was a contradiction to have been objective in speculation about the most subjective of all things—faith. It was both tragic and comical that Herzen, who felt more deeply than even Belinsky the importance of being an individual—a subject—should have attempted an objective approach to faith. The crowning blow for Herzen came with the sudden realization that his efforts were of no avail. Since it was impossible for him to ascertain

directly, and with certainty the true nature of Christ and God, then they must be illusion. For ten years Herzen had faced the baffling image of Christ. That he realized he was confronted by a paradox cannot be denied, for why else would a man spend long years in an attempt to establish a beach-head on sacred territory through the powers of his own speculative intellect? The Paradox was a challenge to Herzen's reason, and that it should and must be for everyone, but Herzen's reason could not penetrate the riddle. Then came the simple and rational conclusion: There is no God. Such was Herzen's decision. Leaving the matter as it stands now, the Paradox was a stumbling block and an offense. But the story is not yet complete. Childish-religiosity and ecclesiastical formalism were also on the scene. From Herzen's childhood, he had been unsympathetic towards the Russian Church. There, was the tyrant behind the throne, the one who sat upon the beast, so to speak, and lifted up the cup upon which was inscribed the word "Mystery". What confusion must have existed in Herzen's mind when he witnessed the Church's shameless prostitution of what the Church itself called sacred. How could man be free and still believe in God, yet to be free man must freely believe in God? From the side of the official Church, Christianity was made to appear a repellent slavery. Childishness, on the other hand, made Christianity appear silly. Besides being a stumbling block and offense, Christianity had been transformed by the Church and well-meaning apologists into something ridiculously juvenile and at the same time thoroughly repulsive. What wonder that Herzen should have kicked over the whole idea of faith in Christ in favor of a more sane though less comforting atheism.

Herzen attached his hopes for eternal happiness for himself and others to the revolutionary act, and establishment of utopian socialism. Having already denied God, in decisively turning away from the Paradox in self-confessed disbelief, Herzen devoted his energies to the foundation of a scheme which would insure attainment of happiness for man in this world. In a sense, socialism became a relative faith. It was composed of those qualities which demand absolute dedication; in accepting the central theme of the socialist idea a general ethic was suggested. On top of all this stood the eschatology, the grand goal, the paradise. Faith in a probability, which would materialize within history, therefore a near certainty, is only relative to itself. To have such relative faith after having denied God is one of the grossest contradictions within atheism itself.

The account of Herzen's approach to and turning away from the sign of the Paradox is now complete. From the religious point of view, Herzen's life from 1842 onwards was one great denouement, marked by signs of growing scepticism with regard to his own capability of constructing an object of faith which could assure him of happiness and freedom.

Herzen's attachment to faith in socialism was not altogether a happy one. In every corner he saw the demons of chance which could destroy all at the slightest provocation. In his two articles of the early and mid-forties, this tendency towards irrationalism was already present. Even though Herzen's religious crisis had passed there is no reason to suspect that Herzen dismissed completely all thoughts of the possibility of a

truly Christian religious outlook. In fact, Herzen was repeatedly drawn back to the question of faith—even in his denial.

In a letter to the Granovsky's (15/10/1843) Herzen wrote:

Christ deeply understood the secrets of the heart as he said: 'Do ye this in remembrance of me'. Periodical festive remembrance—this is a subjective celebration and a great thing. Only the prosaic soul does not understand this. Life flows on—not in recollection, but man sets up milestones, reaches them and looks back, reviving the past. I repeat: such celebrations have two sides and over them both the inscription is good—though contradictory: 'Memento mori' on one side and 'Vivere memento' on the other. Vive la Vie! Vive l'amour, l'amitié—What else can there be?⁶⁷

"He who loses his life shall gain it" is a parallel contradiction. Belief is essential as the only possible way of bridging these conflicting ideas and it is folly to enter upon an argument about immortality. One can almost detect a note of regret that he cannot believe, but at the same time a stubborn insistence that to believe is folly. The indifferent ones do not worry, but the atheist, because of his atheism, continually directs his attention to the Paradox. Once again, just as faith is not a static position so also is atheism towards Christianity a constant conflict of certainty and uncertainty which can only be resolved in belief, moment by moment.

Amidst this struggle, Herzen was busily shaping his socialist ideology. In doing so, in attempting to outline a program of development, a philosophy of history, Herzen was continually confronted by circumstance. "The savage powers of circumstance always find opportunity to wound me in the sorest place."⁶⁸ Herzen was gradually coming to recognize the pointlessness of constructing an objective order which could be destroyed by the act of one individual, by the subject. Within the System (Hegelianism) circumstance played a very minor role. It had very little to do with "rational reality". Necessity must always triumph over the sporadic powers of chance. Herzen had already begun to think of the powers of circumstance, and his thoughts grew to a veritable obsession. Chance remained in Herzen's mind, always within the sinister context given it by Hegel, and eventually gave birth to Herzen's philosophy of irrationalism.

In August of 1844, Herzen was confronted with another bit of chance occurrence. His only son had become ill. "In what a deep pool of chance the life of man is held! I know I am powerless to struggle against a dull-witted but strong power with my strength as a person."⁶⁹ "The variability of the highest things in life can drive one insane."⁷⁰

Not only the goodness of life but also life itself is variable (*shatkost*); the slightest imbalance in the chemistrism in the struggle of an organism with its component parts—and life itself is extinguished. Life in its highest form is weakness, because all material power is exhausted in order to attain that highness.⁷¹

In the "Memoirs", this is recorded:

We are enraged at the stupidity of fact, quite as if someone were to promise that the world will be wonderful, just, and running smoothly.

We are amazed at the abstract wisdom of nature and historical de-

velopment. But it is time now to consider that in nature and in history there is much chance, stupidity, miscarriage, and complication.⁷² Herzen thus imposed a limit to reason. Chance cannot deny reason or prohibit it, but it does impose a capricious border around it.

Herzen's socialism was individualist and personalist in tone, and was in no way inclined towards an objectivized program of history. Deathly suspicious of all order, after his encounter with the System, Herzen was not reluctant to reveal the anarchical implications of his scheme. In this respect, the influence of Proudhon is evident. Nor was Herzen entirely sympathetic to facts. He had occasion to study Comte and positivist philosophy, but turned away from it because facts in themselves are nothing. The West was in a sense his "Mecca". He relied on the West's furnishing a pattern of revolutionary socialism which would serve as an example to the genuinely democratic socialist (*narodnik*) elements in Russia. That Herzen was a *Narodnik* cannot be overemphasized. In this he differs from Belinsky who insisted that the people were so stupid that one had to drag them to happiness by force. Herzen's socialism was to grow out of the people, and be for them. In this he saw the possibility of real freedom, but only the possibility. In 1847, Herzen succeeded in obtaining a permit which would allow him to leave Russia for Western Europe. He left Russia almost immediately, and was never to return. The first year abroad was spent mainly in Paris and in Italy. He had come at an opportune time for revolution was in the air, and to Herzen it seemed that a new era was dawning. At the first news of the Paris uprising in 1848, Herzen rushed to the scene of action, only to witness the crushing of his dreams. For him the revolution was a complete failure, because the people were out of it altogether. Instead of the monarchists, the small shop keepers ruled the scene. And with the advent of the bourgeois spirit, came a dismal regression. Back again to the bitter struggle between avarice on one hand and envy on the other. Of all the adverse tricks played by fortune this was the worst for Herzen. His position was already precarious—an atheist, but with no certainty whatsoever, illusive or real, and a sceptic towards his own philosophy of action, his ethic, and his destiny. The decimation of all his hopes in the Paris revolution of 1848 left him desolate. The rug had been pulled from under him.

These last few pages will be devoted to Herzen's post-1848 philosophy which was signalized by the publication of his book: "*S tovo berega*" (From the Other Shore).

Taken as a whole, Herzen's thinking after the June days in Paris was governed by growing despair and anguish. Among his contemporaries he saw nothing but indifference—indifference towards themselves, towards the world, and towards others. "A man is indifferent who has lost not only hope but also hopelessness."⁷³ Conscience is a thing which is lost or to be deafened. Herzen admitted that much wisdom had been splashed on the face of the world, but to no avail. "All kinds of theories of life have been preached, the Gospel and Philosophy; everyone is agreed, no one contradicts them, but not a soul attempts to carry them out."⁷⁴ "Everyone talks of Phalansteries, of democracy, socialism, but they listen and

don't understand . . . Let this old world end itself in the poorhouse like it wants—you can do nothing to help it.”⁷⁵ The great thinkers of the time had penetrated the social problems more deeply than ever before, and out of their efforts came theories which defied fulfillment. “Here is our position: on one side logical consistency, progress in thought; on the other, complete impossibility.”⁷⁶

What is the use of exertion? The life of nations becomes a senseless game; pathetic mankind—they add one grain of sand to another, stone to stone, and everything caves in and the unhappy creatures crawl out from under the ruins, clean up the place, build shacks out of boards and broken pillars in order to bring it to another catastrophe hundreds of years later. Shakespeare was right when he said that history is a monotonous story told by a fool.⁷⁷

History repeats itself seldom, it is an improvisation and makes use of every accidental element, it knocks on thousands of doors and who can say which one will open—perhaps it will be the Baltic (door) and Russia may turn herself loose on Europe and gain a foothold there—perhaps.⁷⁸

In regard to progress, Herzen had something to say. He did not deny its existence, but showed how worthless it is when viewed from the standpoint of the individual in time. “Progress is a prize, which history gives to the ones who arrive latest.”⁷⁹ Progress is consistent but it is no goal, since it is eternal. What comfort then to know that after one is dead, things will be better? Actually, man has nothing but himself in this moment. All the elaborate fabrications of logical science, all the abstractions of thought lead nowhere. To Herzen there was no orderly philosophy of history, no guarantee of “future progress”. The betterment of the world was to him unlikely, but the worsening of things only too possible. The dualism of thought and action, order and circumstance was so strongly brought home to Herzen that he could hope for nothing but today.

Such was Herzen's Philosophy of the irrational. The religious problem was tightly braided with the purely historical-philosophical problem.

It has come to the point where I can't distinguish the difference between slavery and religion. How can one know which slavery is better, which religion is more holy. Which is more oppressive—an honorable republic or an honorable monarchy. On both sides there is slavery.⁸⁰

An atheist towards Christianity, Herzen nevertheless was aware that it was only a simple step to some other religious faith of a relative nature. His grievance towards the liberals of the day was that they, in their atheism had created another object of adoration, especially the deification of the masses. But Herzen did not sympathize with indifference. To him, Goethe was the epitome of indifference while such men as Schiller, Fichte, Rousseau, and Byron—believers in ideals, in mankind—pleased Herzen much more. But these men suffered and their ideals were of no help to them.

Why don't you have faith?—Herzen asked himself— Byron gave an answer long ago: “What should I do in order to begin to have faith?”

We live in that period of history in which one can believe without

thinking, or apprehend without faith. You think that doubt is easy but don't you know that in a moment of weakness the possibility may be given to believe in something.⁸¹

Herzen then brought forth an example of fanatical faith in the other world, then he remarked:

What a difference there is between this fanaticism and belief in humanity, in the approach of a better organization of human society! That is a thought, a conviction but not a religion. But yes, it is a thought, it is logic and abstraction and even could be a religion. To be sure it isn't a religion of the 'Jenseits' but rather a religion of 'Diesseits', the religion of science, the absolute, transcendental reason and idealism. Explain to me why it is that so many find belief in God stupid while it is not at all silly to believe in mankind? Why is it stupid to believe in the Kingdom of Heaven and clever to accept all earthly utopias for their face value? After we rid ourselves of positive religion, all the religious conventions remain, and after we have lost the Paradise of Heaven, we believe in the realization of a paradise on earth.⁸²

On one hand the Christian martyrs gave their lives for a life in Heaven, while the revolutionists in France gave their lives for the Republic. In both cases there was unshakeable faith. "Both were in the wrong. The martyrs did not arise from death, and the Republic of France did not materialize. We see all this, so how can we believe."⁸³ Herzen did not attempt to devalue belief of any kind, for to him it was the generating force behind a wildly careening history, its pathos. In appraising the nature of faith, Herzen came very close to the mark. "Faith, as it exists in the human soul is a completely individual fact or an epidemic. One can't directly grasp such things by the hair."⁸⁴ As far as Herzen was concerned, belief in life after death was as absurd as the prediction that peace and loving brotherhood would come into being in the near future, since mankind knows only the brotherly love that existed between Cain and Abel. "How can you hold it against me if I don't choose to believe in such tomfoolery? Whether it is easier or more difficult, the matter stands as always—I can not believe."⁸⁵ In the face of destructive circumstance, the dashing of dreams, the shattering of hope, man cannot remain the same.

He must become either more religious to find more solace in his faith, although death lies in his heart, or he can hold bravely to his last hope, even in bitter pain, doing nothing to nurture the last remaining leaves that must eventually blow away in the cold autumn wind. Which of the two is better? It is hard to say. One leads to the happiness of idiocy, the other to the misery of knowing. Man must himself do the choosing. One is extraordinarily durable for it takes everything, the other is guaranteed by nothing for it dispenses much. I, for one, choose the poverty of knowledge.⁸⁶

If one seeks an example of an absolute atheism, that is the near impossibility of living one's life in *complete* disbelief, it may be found in Herzen. So total was his disbelief in Christianity, so total was his disbelief in a possible religion of the "Diesseits" that he condemned himself

willingly to live in a void, in utter hopelessness and despair. Christianity still remained foolishness. This was brought out time and again, but the following, I think, shows it most clearly.

The man of the people loves his fellow man, I can understand that; the Christian speaks of loving one's neighbor, I see that also; but such a love that includes all that has ceased being an ape—from the Eskimos, to the hottentots, from the Dalai-lama to the Pope—goes completely over my head.⁸⁷

There was nothing in religion but fanatical and fantastic illusive hope that breeds collapse and ruin. On the other hand, knowledge could not penetrate the secrets of history, for history was nothing but irrational insanity.

At precisely this point in Herzen's development, another basic contradiction came to light. He turned from France back to Russia in the spirit of true Russian messianism. As if clutching for straws, he grappled onto the Russian "muzhik", the common peasant, a member of his village commune, as the potential savior of not only Russia but of the world. Haxthausen and Custine were the two great influences in this particular turn in Herzen's thinking. Herzen's letter to George Herwegh (25/8/49) expressed these ideas for the first time. Though Herzen saw nothing in the so-called "religion of progress", he did see the possibility of a certain amount of freedom in forming the future. In this way, he derived the personalist socialist ideology of the Village Commune and its potential ability to reshape Russia. Through the 1850's, Herzen published the Russian language periodical "Kolokol" which advanced many novel political ideas—all revolving around the question of the abolishment of serfdom and the establishment of the free commune. For ten years, Herzen found attentive ears in Russia, but once the serfs were freed in 1861, Herzen's popularity began to fade, to give way to a new breed of intellectuals called the Nihilists.

Herzen doggedly held his position, but continual struggle with Chernishovsky and sporadic disagreements with Bakunin sapped his earlier strength. He was entirely by himself and fighting a lone battle. Declared "superfluous" by the men of the sixties, Herzen lost complete touch with his compatriots. The two generations were strange and hostile towards one another. During his last years, Herzen weaved in and out of positivism, nihilism, irrationalism and got nowhere in his despair. In 1870, the last year of his life, Herzen wrote in his diary: "We were born to destroy—we have created nothing."⁸⁸

Till the end of his days, Herzen could not bring himself to believe—in anything. But in spite of this conviction, he clung tensely to his last hope—the personalist type of socialism exemplified by the Village Commune.

During the last ten years of Herzen's life he receded ever more into obscurity. So long had he been away from Russia, he could no longer continue to call himself a tribune or the conscience of either the people or the government. As the revolutionary movement raced onwards during the brash sixties, Herzen was at a loss to explain or even hope to under-

stand what was happening. Desperately he clung to his faith in the inherent justice and ethical good personified by the Russian Muzhik as a member of the Village Commune. This he did as an idealist, in spite of his inclination to reject all faith and to despise all rationality. But this did him no good. The "Kolokol" finally went bankrupt for want of readers and Ogaryov became a hopeless alcoholic and the willing tool of the designing Netchaev, and Bakunin, the naive firebrand. During these years, Bakunin and Herzen were increasingly at swords' points.

Ever since the collapse of every dream Herzen ever had in the failure of the Paris Revolution in 1848, he never again found even temporary ground on which to make a stand. Surrounded by failure, and ruin at the eve of his life, never having given an intimation that he had changed his mind about the matter of having faith in Christ, Herzen reluctantly had to admit that he had created nothing.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

At first glance, the problem of determining the nature of early Russian atheism as expressed by the three men we have considered in the preceding chapters would seem to appear as a strictly historical problem. Assuming that the type of mass atheism prevalent in Russia today is but a phenomenon which finds its origin in some part of Russia's past, ready to be objectively determined by following the consequences back to the source, it became evident that historical investigation could carry the load only to a certain point and no further. The reason for this is that history finds itself unable to cope with the elements of subjectivity and the eternal which surround the act of becoming an atheist or a Christian. Atheism and faith, but not their consequences, pose equal difficulty to the historian because atheism and faith are the results of unprovable subjective acts performed by isolated individuals, not mere events to be recorded in time. History is free to judge an event whether rightly or wrongly, but judge an act of belief or disbelief it cannot, for it would be an attempt to objectivize and prove what is by nature the most subjective and unprovable of all things. Faced by such limitations as are inherent in historical science, it has been necessary to temper this study by appropriate philosophical and theological considerations, which aid one in gaining a proper understanding of Russian atheism in its proper perspective.

According to historical tradition, Belinsky, Bakunin, and Herzen have been listed as the guiding lights of early nineteenth century Russian atheism. Of these three personalities, only Belinsky has survived in that he has been made a fountainhead of Pre-Marxian atheist thought. Herzen too still finds readers in modern Russia, but primarily as a founder of a socialist revolutionary tradition. Bakunin has simply been forgotten; erased by decree as Trotsky was later on. In spite of the current trends of popularity, each of these men have to be recognized as initiators of an atheist tradition in Russia. The object of the foregoing exhaustive study has been to establish the nature of this mid-nineteenth century Russian atheism, to determine the extent to which it was directed against Christianity, and to discover, if possible, the roots of modern mass atheism.

It must be understood that there is no proof of another's faith or disbelief. The detached and objective observer cannot impose a kind of religious litmus paper test upon someone else and expect to obtain a yes or no answer. "Repudiation is my God"; "If God exists, we must dispose of Him"; "The Russian people are atheistic by nature" and other such

statements are of little value in themselves. If such utterances form a basis for religious tabulation, Christianity would be lost, and a study of this type would have little meaning. In this paper, an attempt has been made to break through the shell of anti-religious clichés in order to discover the essence of repudiation, negation, revolt, the destruction of God.

The results have shown, that the word atheism, loosely used, is highly suspect. It is a common handle attached conveniently to those who do not seem kindly disposed to Christianity, just as faith has come to mean an attitude of patrician acquiescence to good form. Belinsky, Bakunin and Herzen all showed animosity towards the established Church. This in itself would seem enough to justify our calling them atheistic as well as anti-clerical. All three at one time or the other advocated progressive social improvement of a revolutionary character. This too, thanks to the unhappy psychological association of the words revolution and atheism, has added something to their atheistic stature. All of this, however, is only what their contemporaries probably thought about them, and what we today are inclined to think. Psychological reactions to such views are important, but only in the subsequent development of an anti-religious tradition. It is impossible for us to determine objectively by autopsy whether or not these three men were atheists, but on the basis of their intellectual development, their letters and works we have been able to gain a clearer insight into their spiritual make-up.

Belinsky's atheism of the mid-forties was essentially a psychological deeply-seated resentment of Hegelian reality. But Hegelian reality was equated with God. When one fell, the other crashed with it. Hegel thought that he had acted in the best interests of Christianity but in so doing he made Christianity as vulnerable as his System, which could justify everything but not itself. This was a dangerous compromise of Christianity. Kierkegaard finally managed to see through the illusion, but there were countless others like Belinsky who were cast into fits of despair and doubt, only to emerge thinking they were atheists. To call Belinsky an atheist is to add more gloss to fantasy. Belinsky, as a believer in the Godliness of the System, was never able to confront Christ, for Christ was hidden from him. Only the tyrannical God-Reality was presented to him and his choice was either to accept the monster meekly or like the man underground kick over the whole arrangement and carry on the best he could according to his own stupid will. After having repudiated "God", he found that the disposal of Christ had its difficulties. Dostoyevsky took advantage of Belinsky's plight by hinting that Belinsky was even more an atheist because he wanted to have Christ on his side of the barricades. The outcome was, of course, a modern version of Marcionism. Christ continued to "bother" Belinsky until his death. The "Letter to Gogol" was Belinsky's last word, and as has already been pointed out, this letter could, or could not have been written by an atheist. Belinsky did not assert that he believed in Christ, but the tone of the letter indicates to us that he was finally aware of the fact that his decision had to be made with relation to Christ rather than to a synthetic Hegelian divinity. As far as we can know, Belinsky did not make a decision. His decision or in-decision must remain his own

secret and to us a mystery. But to others, who want to see in him the paragon of atheism, he is an atheist of their own making.

Bakunin went through approximately the same kind of intellectual training as Belinsky did. Hegelianism did not leave many scars on Bakunin. Confidently, imaginatively and competently he turned the disadvantages of Hegel to revolutionary advantage. Reaction against Hegel did not bring about a severe religious crisis. That was to come later. The climax was finally reached in the late sixties with the heralding of a new era of radical Godless revolutionary anarchism. All was swept aside that seemed to constrict human freedom in any way. Quite simply, he had drawn a clear line between absolute freedom and absolute power. God fell into the same category as the monarchs, bureaucrats and police. God was negated. The attack on Christianity and religion in general was not occasioned by religion itself but by a distorted interpretation of Christianity as the religion of power. Typical of the great prophets of the Power-God was Pobedonostsev, who implied that the proof of God's existence was the existence of the autocratic state. Therefore, if God exists he must be destroyed along with the state until the last remnant of power is reduced to ashes. But was the object of Bakunin's wrath really Christianity? It was not. The nature of the paradox which Christ poses to the potential believer was not even noticed. Bakunin was an atheist against an illusory, fictitious, idealistically conceived God. Bakunin like Belinsky was then confronted with the problem of what to do about Christ. Christ became the "Scientific Christ" which gave nothing, and expected nothing of man. But science could be two things: either the benefactor or the tormentor of man. Bakunin never went beyond this dead end paradox. More than likely Bakunin died believing he was an atheist, but his "atheism" was only a reflection of a badly distorted Christianity.

Herzen came closer than either Belinsky or Bakunin to real atheism. In the early 1840's, he made his frank and honest decision. Immortality had no basis in fact; it as an idle fantasy indulged in by those who are prone to wishful thinking. Coupled with this, he viewed Christianity as the religion of death. He could not believe that by losing one's life it would be saved. This was too much to comprehend, so he refused to have any more to do with it. A friend urged him to be as a little child in his faith, but this sentimental attempt to defend Christianity made Herzen more thoroughly convinced that Christianity was nothing but a silly childish prank designed for man's own deception of himself. He could not believe and said that he could not believe. This is not meant to be a condemnation of Herzen. In fact it was far the best thing for him to do. An honest yes or no is far better than "could be". Herzen never attacked God as Bakunin did, but he made it known that he would seek his own way without God's help. After the crowning defeat of his hopes in 1848, circumstance and despair arose to torment him, to the extent that he was even sceptical towards his own thought. He became an exponent of irrationalism, he desperately pinned his last shred of hope to the destiny of the Russian Muzhik, but at heart he was never at rest. Today it is the confident Herzen of the 1840's the champion of revolutionary socialism, the rebel who

denied his God that is heralded in his native land.

The men of the forties left to their successors, the nihilists of the sixties, a great fund of anti-religious writing. In the light of tradition building, the subjective origins of atheism had to disappear. The trend, originally begun as a reaction against Hegel on moral, social, and religious grounds, later grew into a full-blown general attack against all values which were even remotely related to the idealist tradition. All religion, thanks to Feuerbach, came to mean idealist God-building. It was really this fictitious idealist religion that made atheists against Christianity, and not Christianity. It will be noted that the great bulk of atheist propaganda rests upon the premise that religion is idealistic. Christianity is not an idealist faith, but men like Hegel have interpreted it as such. Therefore, the modern atheist tradition must begin with Hegel, the man who removed Christ from Christianity. The success of the atheist movement was to depend on the perpetuation of an idealist, Christless Christianity on one hand and the infallible arguments of the propagators of mass atheism on the other. Hegel created the conditions which then fostered the misdirected atheism of Belinsky and Bakunin. As soon as others observe such "atheism", they were already psychologically prepared to accept it as true atheism, acknowledging the "fact" that Hegelian philosophy, a corrupted church, and reactionary government were all manifestations of Christianity. Where Belinsky and Herzen struggled with the problem of what to do with Christ, where they both realized that Christ Himself is the focal point of Christianity, where they went through the dreadful struggle to decide one way or the other with regard to Him, the successors of these men in Russia seem to have completely overlooked the figure of Christ, and His historical reality. But those who immediately followed Hegel, and who later revolted from him were serious enough in their thinking to wonder in passing why it was that Christ came to this earth. Could He not have been God as well as a "great man"? Such considerations led to Belinsky's final indecision, to Herzen's personal atheism and to Bakunin's troubled concessions to a mythical "Scientific Christ". These vague attempts to rediscover Christ, were drowned out by the more sensational, exhilarating, and emotional attacks against Hegelian idealism. Catch words, cliches, slogans were coined for general circulation, and it wasn't long before atheism was an accepted ingredient for the revolutionary stew then being stirred by Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, and Pisarev.

The advent of the nihilists on the Russian scene marked a departure from the idealist and romanticist traditions developed during the preceding generation. As the idealists of the forties were influenced by western thought so were the nihilists. But Hegel no longer was the oracle. Feuerbach, Comte, Moleschott, Buchner, and Vogt replaced him, while "natural science" became the center of intellectual attention. The purposes of the movement itself were ill-defined but can be summed up generally as the following: the emancipation of earthly man, man's freedom from suffering, the establishment of conditions for a happy life, the utter destruction of all superstition and prejudice, conventional standards, and lofty ideas. Life was opposed to ideas about life, practice was to precede

theory. This turn of events had nothing to do with the now classical dialectical process of history of the Hegelian-Marxian variety but was the simple expression of a physiological materialistic sensualism. The heart and soul of the nihilist movement was fact. Facts were to be based objectively according to scientific laboratory methods. Abstract truth for them was non-existent. Turgenev's great work, "Fathers and Sons" preserves the image of the Russian nihilist of the 1860's in the figure of Bazarov. Turgenev said of Bazarov: "He has no faith in principles, but he has faith in frogs."¹

What does matter is that two and two make four, and the rest is all foolery. . . . Nature too is foolery in the sense you understand it.

Nature's not a temple, but a workshop and man's the worker in it.²

Here the younger generation seemed arrogant and conceited in the eyes of the fathers, while the youngsters looked upon the older liberals as ineffectual and outdated. In cutting away the underbrush of romantic idealism, foggy thinking and effusive talk in favor of realism in practice, these nihilists obliterated much that was superfluous, but much too that was valuable. Where the men of the forties seriously pondered the religious implications of Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity", the nihilists of the sixties accepted Feuerbach at face value, taking religion to be nothing but anthropomorphism. Hegel was in no way brought under critical observation. Because of this combination of an unwillingness to consider anything that did not fall into realist scientific category, an inherent animosity towards theocracy, and a desire to be atheistic and materialistic, the nature of Christianity was never thought to be anything but a superstitious, degenerate idealist "principle". Christianity was in effect crudely relegated to the dump heap along with all the other principles. To the exclusion of all else, only the accumulation of material scientific facts could possibly provide a basis for truth even though general truth was declared a fantasy. The materialistic physiological simplicity and superficiality of nihilism and its contempt of individual human values is brought out this way by Bazarov:

I assure you, studying separate individuals is not worth the trouble.

All people are like one another, in soul as in body; each of us has brain, spleen, heart, and lungs made alike; and the so-called moral qualities are the same in all; the slight variations are unimportant. A single human specimen is sufficient to judge all by. People are like trees in a forest; no botanist would think of studying each single birch tree.³

Another book which was very popular during this period was Chernyshevsky's "What is to be done?" Chernyshevsky was a direct "descendent" of Belinsky. The passion for earthy realism, the abolition of intellectual sham, the yearning for a new moral, and a new man, all of which characterized the feeling of the nihilists, found a parallel in that period of Belinsky's development in which he turned violently against Hegel. Here was the first instance of an emotional combination of revolutionary socialism with atheism. Belinsky could not reconcile himself with the *idea* of God. The nihilists could not reconcile themselves with any *idea*,

divine or otherwise. It was from this period of Belinsky's atheism against the idea of God as propounded by Hegel, that Chernyshevsky and his associates found the source of their own superficial atheism. Christianity had originally been described by Hegel as a principle, Belinsky denied the principle and Chernyshevsky later enlarged on the denial. Where Belinsky questioned his denial critically, the nihilists accepted the denial "on faith", which surprisingly enough is one of the major "don'ts" of any nihilism. Chernyshevsky's novel actually had more influence in the shaping of the nihilist code than the rest of his writings. He created a new man as the embodiment of the materialist principles he taught. Published in 1863, the novel was widely used as a textbook for the growing numbers of the new realists. It became a kind of gospel, not a tightly argued case for realism, but simply the story of the new man. Unconsciously, many succumbed to being a "type". Coupled with this attempt to construct a particular "type" on a mass scale, the realists moved out ahead of their literary propaganda in order to make personal contact with the people. This marked the beginning of revolutionary Narodnichestvo, with atheism as an integral part of the entire program. Nihilism also provided spiritual force for the terrorists. Both the nihilists and the terrorists were religious fanatics of a peculiar variety. The terrorists, out of a love of truth and justice, righteousness, and freedom found themselves religiously devoted to the organization of murder. Among these social and political agitators, revolution replaced Heaven as the object of belief. Their sacrifice and personal martyrdom reminds one of the days of the first Christians in Rome, and their martyrdom.

Bakunin was closely associated with this new revolutionary movement through Netchaev. The flaming anti-religious arguments Bakunin set forth in his "God and the State" found ready listeners in Russia. Minds had already been conditioned for the reception of this new word by such men as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev. Religion, quite simply, was the enemy because it was an idealist sham, a deception, and the partner of Tsarist despotism. Not much attention was given to Bakunin's paradoxical problem of what to do about Christ. No one seemed to care, except such men as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Soloviev. But atheist propaganda had already reached the ears of too many, the emotional pitch was already too high for the religious thinkers to make much of a splash in the already churning sea of revolutionary and anarchistic excitement. The lines had already been subtly drawn: religion was by nature idealistic and man's own deception of himself. Bread was the vital thing. Dostoyevsky spread the warning, but he was too late.

Dost thou know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger? 'Feed men then ask of them virtue!' that's what they will write on the banner, which they will raise up against thee, and with which they will destroy thy temple.*

Here were the conditions for a world shaking revolution, if only these wild forces could be channeled. Tkatchov was among the first to design a way of action. He was unpopular among the popular revolutionaries and

anarchists because he argued that revolution would only succeed if led by a minority. He had little patience with the idea of educating the people for revolution, for he thought that people should be the raw materials out of which the skilled leaders could manufacture a victorious revolution, the finished product. Anarchism found no place at all in his scheme. The state, he said, should *not* be destroyed; it should be captured and adapted to the function of carrying out the revolution. Tkatchov was among the first to study Marx and to talk about him among the Russian revolutionaries. In this respect, Tkatchov was the first Bolshevik.

A solid line of development from Netchaev to Tkatchov to Lenin can be detected in the revolutionary movement of the late nineteenth century. It emerged at the party congress in 1903 as Bolshevism, or Russian Marxism. We shall not enter into the intricacies of this Marxist-Leninist line of development except to point out one dominant characteristic of it.

Not only in Russia, where Marxism was rapidly gaining ground under Lenin's brilliant leadership, but also in the West, forces were at work reshaping man's own concept of himself. Individual men were gradually coming to consider themselves only as a part of some artificially conceived category. All mankind was becoming stylized under the impact of the combined psychological forces of the machine, the press, schools, rapid communication and finally the propaganda of nationalist and internationalist political philosophers and strategists. Various groups were allotted predetermined convictions, stereotyped habits, and an attitude commensurate with the class or nationality into which each group had arbitrarily been classified. Capricious generalizations about the components of modern society were formulated and read back to the groups involved. In time, simple groupings, such as the proletariat and the bourgeoisie became affected groupings. This could not have come about without the leaders who instigated various forms of mass consciousness, nor without the natural desire of every man to be a part of some grand totality, a member of some community of thought and existence. But soon, the *mass was to become the entity and not the individual.*

It was in Marxism and its subsequent development as Bolshevism that mass solidarity was achieved through propagandistic hypnotic suggestion. The presence of mass consciousness, a proletariat, was the prime necessity for the fulfillment of the revolutionary dream. Mass thought in the West grew more of itself without any purposeful design, while unity of mass in the Russian revolutionary movement became the prerequisite for concerted class struggle. "The unity of that genuinely revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class to set up a heaven on earth is more important to us than a unity in proletarian opinion about the imaginary paradise in the sky."⁵ According to Lenin, the masses had to remain welded together in the spirit of Marxist socialism. Unity of purpose had to be supreme. For this reason Lenin demanded that "the fight against religion must not be limited to abstract, ideological preaching. This struggle must be linked up with the concrete practical class movement; its aim must be to eliminate the roots of religion."⁶ In order to accomplish this, religion was conceived as an institution having an economic basis, and one of the many means by

which the masses were being cheated and duped by the capitalists. "Marxism always regarded all modern religions and churches, and every kind of religious organization as instruments of that bourgeois reaction whose aim is to defend exploitation by stupifying the working class."⁷ Religion in general is again defined in more explicit form as the fear of the blind force of capital. "This," said Lenin, "is *THE tap-root* of modern religion."⁸ Finally, Lenin coupled up the necessity for concerted struggle with atheism. It is a must, that 'these masses learn to fight against the social facts from which religion arises in a united, disciplined, planned and conscious manner,—to fight *against the rule of the capitalist in all its forms*."⁹ Lenin, cleverly, did not want to bring the religious question into the foreground, because he feared the preoccupation with this problem would distract the attention of the masses from the central totalitarian idea of fighting an economic war against all, including the religious forms of capitalism. For this reason Lenin said that a priest would be welcomed into the Party if he followed the line, "for the contradictions between the spirit and principles of our program and the religious convictions of the priest could, in these circumstances, be regarded as a matter in which he contradicts himself."¹⁰ Here was the basis for mass atheism. Propaganda came into active play.

Engels advised the leaders of the modern proletariat to translate the militant atheist literature of the end of the eighteenth century for mass distribution among the people. . . . It is essential to give these masses the greatest variety of atheist propaganda material.¹¹

All of this points up the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were primarily concerned with the necessity of creating a mass, with a total outlook on life, which would of itself supplant conventional religiosity by its own totalitarian religious character. In this respect, Christianity shall always be the enemy in Communist eyes.

Communism in actual fact is the foe of every form of religion and especially of Christianity, not as a social system, but as itself, a religion. It wants to be a religion itself, to take the place of Christianity. It professes to answer the religious questions of the human soul and to give a meaning to life. Communism is integrated; it embraces the whole of life; its relations are with no specific section of it. On this account its conflict with other religious faiths is inevitable.¹²

In this manner, the spectre of mass atheism arose in Russia, until it has been accepted at this time as atheism, per se. This type of atheism, however, is neither philosophically nor theologically explainable as a phenomenon but is a carefully nurtured psychological attitude or mentality. Mass atheism is not the mass denial of God, but an enforced non-recognition of the idea of God. There is a definite cleavage between atheism in the proper sense, and atheism as produced on the assembly line. The difference between these two comes clearly to light in the study of the sources of mass atheism.

In regarding mass atheism as it stands today, it would be as dismal an error to assume that it had always been so, as it would be, upon considering the spectacle of mass faith in Christ, to assert that Paul believed in Christ

only because Peter did. For this reason, it was necessary to begin with the subjective beginnings of Russian atheism rather than become stranded on the objectively bleak and desolate stage of mass-atheistic theatrics. To speak of the origins of Godlessness, one cannot speak in terms of a decadent Church, Darwinian theory, poverty of the oppressed, tyranny of tyrants, or exploitation of the capitalists, but one must in some way seek out one individual's reaction to Christ. That alone is the measure of faith or atheism. This is not to say that these other factors are unimportant, but to emphasize the necessity of viewing these factors in relation to the thinking individual. The subjective decision with regard to Christ, the sign of faith and offense, is the heart of the matter. All else becomes secondary. Without an appreciation of this, the whole problem fades away into the impossibilities of fantastic comedy and hopeless tragedy.

In spite of the fact that Belinsky is now looked upon as one of the traditional mainstays of the whole anti-religious movement, there is no reason for us to believe that he was an atheist. Though Bakunin excitedly broadcast his crude "atheism" against the Christianity of Power, there is no basis for accounting him as an atheist in opposition to Christ. As individuals, as persons, neither were atheists. But both of them were emotionally and passionately unsettled about the whole question of Christianity. Herzen was even more unsettled than they, but he did not contribute his feelings on the problems of religion as freely and as vociferously as did Belinsky and Bakunin. In this respect, though more genuinely atheistic than his contemporaries, Herzen added *less* to the anti-religious movement in Russia than his pseudo-atheistic colleagues! This striking paradox is further borne out by the following excerpt from Kierkegaard's "Postscript", written in 1846.

But only slatternly men let go of that which once has made an absolute impression on them, and only paltry souls practice despicable usury with their own suffering by seeking to get out of it the miserable profit of being able to unsettle others, and by becoming self-important with the basest presumption which wants to prohibit others from finding comfort because one has not found it himself. If there be any man in our time whom Christianity has unsettled (as I have no doubt is the case, and as can be proven factually), one thing can be required of him, that he keep silent. For his talk, ethically regarded, is a thievish assault, and in its consequences still worse than that, for it ends with neither of them having anything, neither the robber nor the victim.¹³

By refusing to keep silent, Belinsky and Bakunin, though not atheists in reality, began a chain reaction by exposing their own personal and subjective troubled thoughts about Christianity and religion to the critical and objective intellectual climate that then prevailed in most of Europe and Russia. This expression of mock atheism, brought about by various distortions of Christianity, only served to distress others and to nourish more misconceptions about religion. In this sense, the expression was the catalyst which transformed atheism as a subjective matter into atheism as an objective frame of mind, as a thing in itself, a piece of merchandise. In this way, atheism could be peddled as an absolute virtue to the masses, then

being shaped in the way described above. Once transformed, atheism spread from one generation to the next, thus becoming traditional and inheritable. Christianity, the victim of this train of events, has been feeling more of the lash and now finds itself in the situation of having to re-state its position and to again make known the condition for faith which has been hidden for so long through its own neglect. Atheism though apparently victorious and strong, has long since lost the right to call itself atheism. This is the position in which modern atheism finds itself today. The difference between that kind of atheism which rises out of the individual's subjective refusal to believe in the Truth of Christ, and that kind of atheism which is now artificially manufactured for mass dissemination among great multitudes; the difference between the subjective origins of true atheism and the objective consequences of it point out to us the way in which Christians of the East and the West must act in order to remedy the situation.

Atheism, by its very nature is a defensive sort of attitude. It is passive, whether it be expressed by silent despair or by aggressive militancy. It is to the advantage of the leaders of mass atheism to make their atheism appear as an objective part of their own objective scientific materialistic religion. At all costs, the mass aspect of their program must be preserved if they expect to retain the power they now possess. It is a paradox that the leaders of mass atheism do not and could not possibly want the secret of subjective atheism revealed in its true light, for in unveiling this, the secret of Christian faith would be disclosed also. The deception of mass atheism would be exposed if these leaders proclaimed what it is to be offended by Christ. Subjectivity and individualism would have to be appealed to, but this would bring the carefully fabricated masses to a state of disintegration, for some might believe while those offended would rise in indignation against the ones who had made a plaything of offense. On the basis of this, it is not probable that mass atheism will ever be transformed by its leaders into true atheism. It is advantageous to them to divert the attention of the masses from what Lenin called an "imaginary paradise in the sky," and to concentrate upon the unity of the oppressed masses in their struggle to set up a paradise on earth. For this reason, the secret of faith and offense is closely guarded.

The initiative is therefore in the hands of those who have faith, if only these faithful ones recognize that initiative is in their hands. But mass faith and Christian complacency have made such opportunity difficult to see. "Christians" today have long since become accustomed to think of Christianity in terms of Church buildings, congregations, and respected clergymen. The individual church has become the unit. We listen to courses of instruction on how we should act like Christians, how we should support this charity or that. This would all be wonderful if Christianity were a political party, or a social movement. Christ, however, was not a political leader, neither did he come to promise bread for all and a more abundant earthly life. The Church is not the basic unit; it is not the smallest component of Christianity. Its role is not to instruct great numbers in the art of acting like Christians, but to proclaim how one is to become a Christian. Such is the task of the Church wherever it may be located. To accomplish this task,

would be to set Christianity's own house in order, but also it would reveal to many the essentially revolutionary character of Christianity and would provide the key to the simple secret of modern mass atheism, the opposite number of mass faith.

In a nutshell, modern Christendom is squandering her time against the day when she will no longer be allowed to proclaim how it is that one becomes a believer, or an atheist. Soon there will be but little chance to expose the securely hidden nature of the atheist myth as it now exists in much of the world. Where the Church is still free, it must become revolutionary. But there is a general straining at the gnat. Whether under the banner of mass faith or mass atheism, a man will live a lie, deceive and be deceived, devour and be devoured; whether he be victorious or be defeated, he will receive nothingness for his pains. The smug Christian poses the real tragedy for he could have gained all through belief. To this end the church must tear off her luxurious vestments and bring into the open the dreadful contradictions that bring some to despair and others to quickened faith. But to deceive the individual into believing so that he may be happy for a while is an insult to man and a mockery of God. Such deception still issues from the pulpits as a stream of maxims, slogans, and clichés which fall like music upon the ears of many. The congregation grows, the illusion gains mock substance in sheer numbers, and many souls are "saved". This is not the preaching of the Word, but refined bellows blowing. Better it be that the Church preached the Paradox that Christ poses to men in its starkest outline and that all men be offended, than to deceive and be damned. This would bring anguish to the soul of each person, and persecution to those who dared present the Gospel in this manner. In this lies the basically revolutionary character of Christianity, the suffering that goes with it, the threat to both mass faith and mass atheism. But, only he who believes can see it.

Where the Church has already been tethered and compromised, where only the outward forms of the Church are left standing, it should be abandoned. It is a Church no more but a heap of stone about to collapse. There the Church must exist in twos and threes in true "Sobornost" or fellowship in Christ, "for where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."¹⁴

The key to the weakness of mass atheism is to be discovered in its subjective origins. It has been the purpose here to accentuate and emphasize the contradiction between the origin and the consequences of the atheist movement as it developed in Russia over the past hundred years. Once the contradiction was established, the weakness of mass atheism became evident, and in that weakness, the revolutionary potential of Christianity. In conclusion, it became evident that the subjective decision of one individual, in infinite and passionate concern for his eternal happiness with regard to Christ had to be Christianity's only defense even though many might be genuinely offended. Her only threat can come solely from those who are but lukewarm, those who either attempt to revise Christianity, or condemn Christianity on the basis of the revision.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the

churches. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.¹⁵

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ Pares, Bernard: "A History of Russia", p. 69.

² Iswolsky, Helen: "Soul of Russia", p. 25.

³ Bleau; "Atlas", Section "Moscovia".

"Die Grossfursten (Tsar) müssen die Unterthanen allen nutzen/ so irgend von Abkompt/ in einen schatz einsamlen/ und verwenden. Von Fursten und Grafen/ so ihre Guter und Lehen haben/ und dieselbe auff ihre Erben verwenden/ hat dieses Land gar nichts. Dann ob wol gemelter Konig etliche besondere Feldguter verleihet/ so gebraucht er sich doch der Bawren dienst/ und nimpt die Guter wann es ihm gefalt/ widerumb von ihnen hinweg; und hat demnach uber alle seine Unterthanen in allen und jeden sachen vollen gewalt/ darein ihme niemand etwas reden oder widersprechen darff/ und derowegend als ein Gott von ihnen wird verehret."

⁴ Iswolsky, Helen: "Soul of Russia", p. 34.

⁵ Ukraine at this time was under Polish rule.

⁶ Bonwetsch, D. N.: "Kirchengeschichte Russlands", S. Yavorsky became a Catholic (1684-87) then returned to Russia to write his famous "Rock of Faith", p. 75.

⁷ Chizhevsky, D.: "Die abendlandliche Philosophie in der alten Ukraine".

Lieb F.: "Russische Geistesgeschichte seit Peter dem Grossen". (Lectures, University of Basel) Protestant currents were also felt in South Russia, for at the end of the XVIth and beginning of the XVIIth century there were no less than 100 Protestant congregations in the Ukraine, made up primarily of aristocratic landowning and middle class gentry.

⁸ Iswolsky, Helen: "Soul of Russia", p. 38.

⁹ A process of demoralization set in. One of the very best examples of the corruption of the Church by the state, and a factor in undermining faith in the sanctity of the Church was the shocking practice of informing. Under instructions by the state, priests who officiated at confession were obliged to transmit any confession of a "sin against the state" to police authorities. Any close tie holding a church and secular power together, let alone the subjugation of a church as a department of a government is bound to divert the church from its true mission.

¹⁰ Gunther, O. E.: "Peter der Grosse im russischen Urteil des 18. Jh.", p. 538. Article in "Jahrbucher fur Kultur u. Geschichte der Slaven". N. F. Bd. X Heft III/IV 1934.

¹¹ Ibid.: p. 542.

¹² Pares, Bernard: "A History of Russia", p. 176 (The Russian) began by asking for the end, and went on with infinite inner conflicts and searchings of the heart to ask for the beginnings. At each step his conception of his own requirements had to be painfully revised; and he would at times come to a dead stop, in fear that he was going too far, that he was losing whatever individuality he possessed. Further, all these things so necessary to him were to come from the outside, from the foreigner, and even then not for the people but for the state, thence only gradually filtering down to the middle and lower ranks of the state service. The foreigner who came to Russia had to be treated better than there was any need to treat a Russian. This of itself provoked an instinctive patriotic revulsion. We have already the antithesis of Europe and Russia, of the westernizers who wish to bring in wholesale what is so obviously better, and the Slavophiles who fear to lose their souls in wholesale imitation of the foreigner.

¹³ Hecker, Julius: "Religion and Communism", p. 83.

¹⁴ Ibid.: p. 85.

¹⁵ Ibid.: p. 86.

¹⁶ Katherine lived her romantic adventure in intellectualism "to the hilt". She idolized such figures as Diderot, Voltaire and others of their type and carried on voluminous correspondence with them. These first years of her long reign were a holiday of playfulness, with serious matters of state as her playthings. Russian dilettanti followed the French line so tenaciously and in such a superficial way that a wit of the day was supposed to have remarked: "When it rains in Paris, umbrellas bloom in Petersburg."

¹⁷ Hecker, Julius: "Religion and Communism", p. 91.

¹⁸ Pushkin, A. S.: "Captain's Daughter", p. 741. The general indignation of the people so well expressed by Pugachov gave birth to an insane fear of revolution on the part of the gentry and others of power so well expressed fifty years later by Pushkin:

"God save us from seeing a Russian revolt, senseless and merciless. Those who plot impossible upheavals among us, are either young and do not know our people or are hard hearted men who do not care a straw either about their lives or those of other people."

¹⁹ Count N. Golovine returned from Prussia in 1747, where he was initiated into Freemasonry.

²⁰ Bogolyubov, V.: "N. Novikov i ego Vremya", p. 182 Jelagin: "Provesti o samom sebe".

²¹ Ibid.: p. 184.

²² Ibid.: p. 185.

²³ Ibid.: p. 258.

²⁴ The "Drone" (1769-70), "The Painter" (1772-3), "The Purse" (1774).

²⁵ Lennhoff, Eugen: "Politische Geheimbunde", p. 209.

²⁶ Marx and Engels Works, Vol. I, p. 366 Russian Edition.

²⁷ Pares, Bernard: "A History of Russia", p. 287.

²⁸ Salkind, Eugenie: "Die Dekabristen in ihrer Beziehung zu West-europa", p. 398.

Patriotic feelings of the future Decembrists were tempered by the impressions gained from the West. They compared the voice of the people in the West with mute obedience to the Tsar in Russia, but without any depreciation of their homeland. Many were enthusiastic for constitutionalism.

²⁹ Ibid.: p. 387.

70% of the 121 Decembrists condemned, had the advantages of a higher education, either military or civil. Private tutors were common in noble families. These teachers came first from Germany and after the French Revolution from France. Except for the reign of Paul I, students were allowed to study abroad, though this advantage was mostly for the aristocracy. Some of the Decembrists were educated at home with stress on languages and economics. Some were graduates of the Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, or from the Jesuit school in St. Petersburg where the Orthodox faith was somewhat undermined.

³⁰ Ibid.: p. 410.

"Upon the return of the Decembrists after the occupation, they were prepared to go hand in hand with the government in the work for their country. But here lay the germ of danger—if the government attempted to restrict liberal progress and shut out the west, the path that these men would be revolutionary".

³¹ Iswolsky, Helen: "Soul of Russia", p. 79. Baroness Krudener was Russian by birth and a preacher influenced by German XIXth century mystics of Protestant hue and by the Bible Society. The Tsar met her after the Congress of Vienna and was impressed by her "prophecies". It is much exaggerated to claim that she inspired him with the idea of the Holy Alliance".

³² Lieb, F.: Lectures at University of Basel.

³³ Pares, Bernard: "A History of Russia", p. 316.

³⁴ Salkind, Eugenie: "Die Dekabristen in ihrer Beziehung zu West-europa".

³⁵ Wolkonsky, Michael: "Die Dekabristen", p. 91.

- ³⁶ Its founders were Alexander N. and Nikita M. Muraviev, Matvii and Sergii Muraviev-Apostle, Prince Trubetskoy, and Yakushkin. Later came Colonel Pestel and Von Vizin.
- ³⁷ Setlin, Michael: "Dekabristy", p. 29.
- ³⁸ Golovine, Ivan: "Russia under the autocrat Nicholas the First", p. 38.
- Vast numbers of persons were arrested on the slightest suspicion; words spoken ten years before were laid hold of which were scarcely, remembered by those who were accused of them, or those who professed to have heard them. Even supposing that calumny had not induced some to make false declarations, fear may have led them to charge others, to extenuate their own faults; words were wrested from their true acception; comments made upon them; and, considering the 'serious nature of the facts', recourse was had to "extraordinary measures!" Some were made to confess inaccurate facts, others to sign pure fiction. ". . . Defense was out of the question; the conspirators were impeached by prejudiced accusers, sentenced by servile judges, and were without the benefit of counsel."
- ³⁹ Wolkonsky, Michael: "Die Dekabristen", p. 111. Nikita Muraviev explained at the trial: "It was my desire that the activity of the government should proceed in a way that would be openly apparent to all, according to the example set by the English".
- ⁴⁰ Pestel, Peter: "Russkaya Pravda", Pares, Bernard: "A History of Russia", p. 314.
- ⁴¹ Pestel, Peter: "Russkaya Pravda", Wolkonsky, Michael: "Die Dekabristen", p. 142. "The Christian Pravoslavie, Greek-Roman religion must be recognized as the dominating church of Russian Empire. Clericals must be regarded as a part of the government for these clericals are officials.
- ⁴² Masaryk, Thomas: "Zur russischen Geschichtsund Religionsphilosophie", p. 88.
- ⁴³ Wolkonsky, Michael: "Die Dekabristen", p. 124.
- ⁴⁴ Voronitsin, I. P.: "Dekabristy i Religia", p. 58. Bodganovitch: "'History of the Reign of Alexander I, Vol. IV, p. 468.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.: p. 59.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.: p. 60. Bodganovitch: "History of the Reign of Alexander I, Vol. IV, p. 468.
- ⁴⁷ Voronitsin, I. P.: "Dekabristy i Religia", p. 46.
- ⁴⁸ Schiemann, T.: "Die Ermordung Pauls und die Thronbesteigung Nikolaus" which includes "Katechismus und Aufruf von Sergej Muraviev-Apostol", quoted from Hecker, J.: "Religion and Communism", p. 106.

Question—"Whence originates freedom?"

Answer—"Every good thing is from God; having created man in his image and provided eternal rewards for good deeds, and eternal damnation for evil works, he endowed man with freedom; otherwise it would be unjust to reward for the good done under compulsion or punish for involuntary evil." Stating further that not all peoples are free at present, since a minority exploits a majority, he explains that "Some have grasped the unjust idea of lording over others, and some have been willing to accept this mean idea and so resign the natural rights of man granted him by God".

Question—"Has not God himself established monarchy?"

Answer—"God in his goodness never created evil. Does it not say 'for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God? No evil power can be from God. 'Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit . . . but every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire'. The same fate shall betake the clergy who are as wolves in sheep's clothing, and of these the Lord shall say 'depart from me, for I have never known thee'".

- ⁴⁹ Hecker, J.: "Religion and Communism", p. 107.

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- ¹ Chizhevsky, D.: "Gegel v Rossii", p. 36.

- ² Ibid.: p. 36.
- ³ Herzen, Alexander: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 264.
- ⁴ Chizhevsky, D.: "Gegel v Rossii", p. 38.
- ⁵ Florovsky, Georgii: "Puti Russkavo Bogoslovija", p. 244.
- ⁶ Chizhevsky, D.: "Gegel v Rossii", p. 42.
- ⁷ Setschkareff, Wsewolod: "Schellings Einfluss in der russischen Literatur der 20. und 30. Jahre des XIX. Jahrhunderts", p. 58.
- ⁸ Ibid.: p. 45.
- ⁹ Herzen, Alexander: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 335.
- ¹⁰ Lieb Fritz: "Das West-europaische Geistesleben im Urteile russischer Religions philosophie", p. 8.

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- ¹ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. II, p. 112.
- ² Pypin, A. N.: "Belinsky, evo Zhizn i Perepiska", p. 19.
- ³ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. II, p. 82-83.
- ⁴ Voronitsyn, I. P.: "V. G. Belinsky i Religia", p. 7.
- ⁵ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. I, p. 25.
- ⁶ Ivanov-Razumnik: "Velikiya Iskania", Vol. III, p. 15.
- ⁷ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. I, p. 122.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.: p. 126.
- ¹¹ Ibid.: p. 123.
- ¹² Ibid.: p. 122.
- ¹³ Dietrich: "W. Belinskij, der Begründer der modernen Literaturkritik", p. 8.
- ¹⁴ Baskakov, V.: "Sozialogicheskije Vozrenia V. G. Belinskovo", p. 29.
- ¹⁵ Voronitsyn, I. P.: "V. G. Belinsky i Religia", p. 7.
- ¹⁶ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. III, p. 35.
- ¹⁷ Kornilov, A. A.: "Molodiye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina", Vol. I, p. 119.
- ¹⁸ Ivanov-Razumnik: "Istoria Russkoy Obshchestvennoy Mysli", Vol. III, p. 4.
- ¹⁹ Chizhevsky, D. I.: "Hegel bei den Slaven", p. 207.
- ²⁰ Setschkareff, Wsewolod: "Schellings Einfluss in der russischen Literatur der 20. und 30. Jahre des XIX. Jahrhunderts", p. 86.
- ²¹ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. I, pp. 308-396.
- ²² Setschkareff, Wsewolod: "Schellings Einfluss in der russischen Literatur der 20. und 30. Jahre des XIX. Jahrhunderts", p. 89.
- ²³ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. I, p. 319.
- ²⁴ Ibid.: p. 347.
- ²⁵ Ibid.: p. 368.
- ²⁶ Ibid.: p. 319.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.: p. 308.
- ²⁹ Kornilov, A. A.: "Molodiye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina", Vol. I, p. 121.
- ³⁰ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. I, pp. 171-188.
- ³¹ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. I, p. 121.
- ³² Ibid.: p. 219.
- ³³ Ibid.: p. 89.
- ³⁴ Ibid.: p. 95-96.
- ³⁵ Ibid.: p. 222-223.
- ³⁶ Ibid.: p. 269.
- ³⁷ Ibid.: pp. 229, 231, 235, 349.
- ³⁸ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. IV, p. 99.
- ³⁹ Billig, Joseph: "Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus bei den russischen Romantikern", p. 30.

- ⁴⁰ Silberstein, L.: "Belinsky und Chernyshevskij," *Jahrbucher für Kultur und Gesch. der Slaven*. N. F., Vol. VII, Breslau, 1931, p. 171.
- ⁴¹ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. I, p. 96.
- ⁴² Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. IV, pp. 338-349, 400-433.
- ⁴³ Ibid.: p. 345.
- ⁴⁴ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. I, p. 213.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 27.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.: Vol. II, pp. 26-29.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 30.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 33.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 70.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 143.
- ⁵¹ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii", Vol. I, p. 83.
- ⁵² Dostoyevsky, F. M.: "The Brothers Karamazov", p. 291.
- ⁵³ Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. II, p. 141.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.: pp. 142, 143.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.: p. 151.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.: p. 154.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.: p. 161.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.: p. 161.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.: p. 165.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.: p. 195.
- ⁶² Ibid.: pp. 212-214.
- ⁶³ Ibid.: p. 168.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.: pp. 262, 266, 268, 269.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.: p. 269.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.: 322
- ⁶⁷ Herzen, Alexander Ivanovitch: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 272.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.: p. 283.
- ⁶⁹ Klemen, M. K. (ed.): "V. G. Belinsky, v Vospominaniakh Sovremenikov", p. 275.
- ⁷⁰ Dostojewski, F. M.: "Autobiographische Schriften", 2nd. Sec., Vol. XI, *Samtliche Werke*, p. 318. (See above, page 42.)
- ⁷¹ Ibid.: p. 320.
- ⁷² Belinsky, Vissarion G.: "Pis'ma", Vol. III, pp. 230-239.
- ⁷³ Kierkegaard, Soeren: "Training in Christianity", p. 30.
- ⁷⁴ Dostoyevsky, F. M.: "The Possessed", p. 35.
- ⁷⁵ Kierkegaard, Soeren: "Concluding Unscientific Postscript", p. 348nn.

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- ¹ Kornilov, A. A.: "Molodiye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina", Vol. I, p. 90.
- ² Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, p. 162.
- ³ Ibid.: p. 168.
- ⁴ Ibid.: pp. 168-170.
- ⁵ Kornilov, A. A.: "Molodiye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina", Vol. I, p. 135.
- ⁶ Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, p. 208.
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- ⁸ Kornilov, A. A.: "Molodiye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina", Vol. I, p. 374.
- ⁹ Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, pp. 385, 398, 403.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.: p. 408.
- ¹¹ Chizhevsky, D. I.: "Hegel bei den Slaven", p. 192.
- ¹² Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. II, p. 70.
- ¹³ Chizhevsky, D. I.: "Hegel bei den Slaven", p. 193.
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- ¹⁵ Ibid.: p. 169.

- ¹⁶ Ibid.: p. 171.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.: p. 177.
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- ¹⁹ Chizhevsky, D. I.: "Gegel v Rossii, p. 97.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. III, p. 8.
- ²² Ibid.: p. 33.
- ²³ Chizhevsky, D. I.: "Hegel bei den Slaven", p. 198.
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- ²⁶ Ibid.: p. 149.
- ²⁷ "Deutsche Jahrbucher fur Kultur und Kunst", 1842, 17-21 October.
- ²⁸ This mood was similar to Belinsky's. See p. 48.
- ²⁹ Bakunin, Michael: "Zwei Schriften aus den vierziger Jahren des XIX. Jh.", p. 8.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
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- ³² Ibid.: p. 13.
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- ³⁴ Ibid.: p. 20.
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- ³⁷ Jakowenko, Boris: "Geschichte des Hegelianismus in Russland", pp. 108-112.
- ³⁸ Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. III, p. 177.
- ³⁹ Carr, E. H.: "Michael Bakunin", p. 129.
- ⁴⁰ Bakunin, Michael: "Polnoe Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. III, p. 111.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.: p. 370.
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- ⁴³ Schiemann, Th. (ed.): *Bibliothek russischer Denkwurdigkeiten*, Band IV, "K. Kavelins und I. Turgenievs Sozial-politischer Briefwechsel mit Alex. Iv. Herzen", p. 158.
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- ⁴⁶ Bakunin, Michael: "Gesammelte Werke", Vol. I, p. 95.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.: p. 96.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.: p. 100.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.: pp. 104-105.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.: p. 106.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.: p. 107.
- ⁵² Ibid.: p. 109.
- ⁵³ Ibid.: pp. 109, 111.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.: 112.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.: p. 133.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.: p. 127.
- ⁵⁷ Pobedonoszew, Konstantin: "Streitfragen der Gegenwart", p. 184.

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- ² Berdyaev, Nicholas: "The Russian Idea", p. 62.
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- ⁴ Ibid.: pp. 44-45.
- ⁵ Ibid.: pp. 51-53.
- ⁶ Ibid.: p. 56.
- ⁷ Ibid.: p. 45.
- ⁸ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, p. 25.

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- ¹⁰ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, p. 29.
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- ¹⁴ Ibid.: pp. 91-105.
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- ¹⁶ Ibid.: p. 73.
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- ²² Ibid.: p. 121.
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- ³² Luke: X, 18.
- ³³ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. I, p. 432.
- ³⁴ Ibid.: p. 351.
- ³⁵ Ibid.: p. 384.
- ³⁶ Ibid.: p. 120.
- ³⁷ Herzen, Alex. IV.: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 279.
- ³⁸ Ibid.: p. 272.
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- ⁴⁰ Ibid.: Vol. IV, pp. 1-182.
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Jakowenko, Boris: "Geschichte des Hegelianismus in Russland", Vol. I, pp. 66-80.
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- ⁴⁴ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 268.
- ⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, Soeren: "Concluding Unscientific Postscript", p. 34.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.: p. 35.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.: p. 34.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.: p. 32.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.: p. 35.
- ⁵⁰ Berdyaev, Nicholas: "The Russian Idea", p. 62.
- ⁵¹ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. II, p. 263.
- ⁵² Ibid.: Vol. XXII, pp. 214-219.
- ⁵³ Ibid.: p. 415.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.: Vol. II, p. 473.
- ⁵⁵ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Erinnerungen", Vol. I, p. 274-276.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.: p. 276.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.: p. 277.
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- ⁵⁹ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol. III, p. 20.
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- ⁶⁴ Ibid.: p. 104.

- ⁶⁰ Ibid.: pp. 256, 257.
- ⁶¹ Kierkegaard, Soeren: "Concluding Unscientific Postscript", p. 53.
- ⁶⁷ Herzen, Alex. Iv.: "Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem", Vol III, p. 268.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.: p. 284.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.: p. 342.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.: p. 361.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.: p. 364.
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- ⁸⁶ Ibid.: p. 414.
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- ⁸⁸ Ibid.: Vol. XXI, p. 531.

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- ¹¹ Ibid.: pp. 20, 21.
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- ¹⁵ Revelations III: 13, 15-16.

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I was born on November 12, 1924, in Lakewood, Ohio, U. S. A., the son of Warren Weiant, agriculturist, and his wife Eleanor Smith Weiant, Hanover Road, Newark, Ohio. I attended the local grammar school for eight years, then the Newark High School for two years, 1938 to 1940. In 1942, I completed secondary training at Cranbrook School, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. I graduated in 1942, having fulfilled the requirements for entrance into the University. From 1942 to 1943 I attended Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, where I studied German Language and Literature, and American and European History. In 1943, I was sent by the U. S. Navy to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. I continued my Germanic and Historical studies as before until July 1944, at which time I was sent to officer's training. I was commissioned in November 1944 as an Ensign, U. S. Navy, and spent about 18 months in the Pacific area. Returning, I was accepted by Cornell University and was able to finish my studies leading to the degree Baccalaureus Artium, June 1947. During the Winter Semester, 1947-1948, I attended the University of Zurich (Phil. I). From early 1948 until June 1950 I have been enrolled at the University of Basel, where I attended the lectures and seminars of Professors Karl Barth, E. Bonjour, F. Buri, W. Kaegi, F. Lieb, E. Mahler, H. van Oyen, and B. Wyss. The dissertation which is hereby submitted has been directed by Prof. Fritz Lieb. It is to him that I am extremely grateful for his generous assistance in my study of Russian Geistesgeschichte.

